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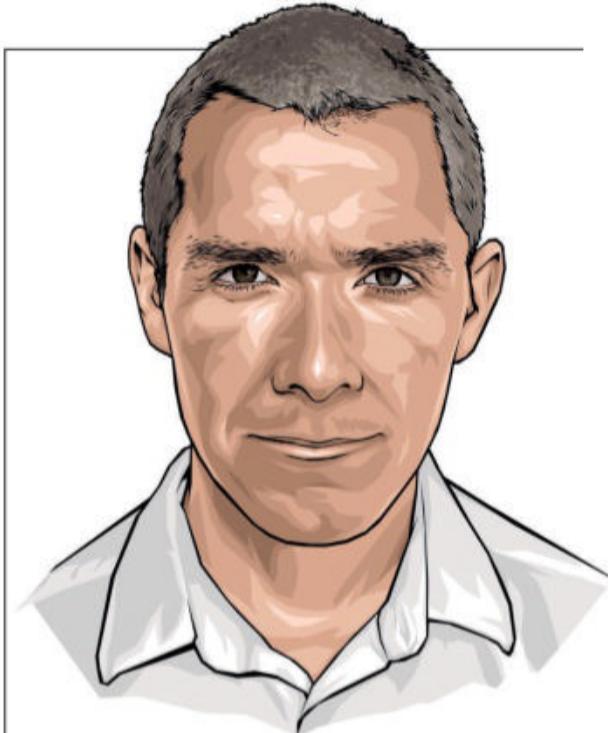
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# IGNITION

OCTOBER 2023



Stuart  
Codling  
Editor

## Contributors



### OLEG KARPOV

Another busy month for Oleg, travelling to Sicily to interview Alessandro Alunni Bravi (p52), and a chat with Yuki Tsunoda and his trainer (p62)



### ANDREW BENSON

BBC Sport's chief F1 writer explains just how McLaren went from also rans to challenging for podiums in only half a season (p30)



### ALEX KALINAUKAS

Autosport's Grand Prix editor managed to get into that most secret of F1 meetings, a team debrief, and this is what he discovered (p42)



### ANDREW FERRARO

We sent Andrew to Sicily to shoot Alfa's Alessandro Alunni Bravi and a classic 1969 GT1300 Junior over the Targa Florio route (p52)



## McLaren is close to finishing its jigsaw...

**From its earliest days**, when Bruce McLaren's payroll extended not far beyond the number of people you could accommodate in a large estate car, his team developed a reputation for engineering excellence. It might have taken a couple of years to get that elusive first win but rivals up and down the Formula 1 pitlane would nod in appreciation at the smart, pragmatic design and exquisite standard of build and race preparation. This was when the company had not long moved out of its first premises, a rented corner of a New Malden shed used to house earth-moving equipment.

Even after the post-Bruce regime faded and Ron Dennis replaced intuitive, oily-fingered engineering principles with space-age technology, glossy sponsor rosters and money-no-object presentation, there was a connection to the past. Forward-looking Ron had a palpable dislike for recall of McLaren's business preceding his arrival – in his distinctively verbose 'Ronspeak' argot, he'd probably describe such activity as "sub-optimal historiographical rose-tinted optical facilitation" or somesuch – but, clinical sheen aside, Dennis-era McLaren prized loyalty, was never afraid to innovate, recruited the best drivers and put them in the best cars it could build. Bruce would have been proud.

Thus it has given us no joy whatsoever to chronicle the team's many travails these past 11 years. McLaren's Technology Centre, the house Ron built, is now the house Zak rents. There have been many false dawns between win number 182

(Jenson Button, Brazil 2012) and 183 (Daniel Ricciardo, Italy 2021) – and even a couple after the latter milestone. But now, after yet another reorganisation, the machinery seems to be humming once again.

As Andrew Benson points out in our cover story (p30) there are still several elements missing before McLaren can become a championship contender once again. But many pieces weren't absent at all, they simply hadn't been recognised or exploited properly. It's taken a thorough review by Andrea Stella, the quietly impressive engineer and manager who has worked with the likes of Michael Schumacher and Fernando Alonso, to empower the talent that already exists within Woking's walls. Most recovery plans in F1 are predicated on promises of new hirings needed to achieve results; getting some of the way there by making better use of existing talent is a narrative you don't often hear.

McLaren's last world champion was Lewis Hamilton in 2008. Now a peculiar postscript to that season is set to play out in court as Felipe Massa makes good on his threat to challenge the outcome. As Matt Kew notes on p106, the chances of success are low, even if you can lay your hands on some suitably rose-tinted optics...

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## Winning machine in action

Another European round with four seasons in one day, but an opportunity to see up close what makes Red Bull such an effective fighting force. While the headlines are dominated by Max Verstappen's winning streak and the apparent superiority of the RB19 package, it's easy to overlook the contribution of the whole team.

Red Bull's pit crew practice relentlessly and they're every bit as fiercely competitive as Max himself. No hint of complacency even as Verstappen notches up the wins. I captured them ready to attach full wets just before the red flag (not that they knew one was in the offing). And, yes, it was as wet as it looks!



**Photographer**  
Simon Galloway

**Where** Zandvoort, Holland

**When** 4:30pm, Sunday

27 August 2023

**Details** Nikon Z9  
70-200mm lens, 1/1000th @ F2.8









## When the *tifosi* seize the moment

This was my first visit to Monza and, while I was aware of the passionate nature of the Italian crowd, to actually be in there and part of it was even more intense than I was expecting. The crowd flooded onto the track as soon as the race finished, each individual desperate to get as close as possible to that fantastic and evocative podium gantry suspended over the pitlane.

I climbed onto the pitwall and then onto the fence to get as many people as possible into the shot. This image really showcases the Italian love of motorsport and, of course, the enthusiasm that follows a decent result for Ferrari – even if it wasn't quite the win they wanted...



**Photographer**  
Jake Grant

**Where** Monza, Italy  
**When** 4:44pm, Sunday  
3 September 2023

**Details** Canon EOS-1DX MkII  
16-35mm lens, 1/500 @ F4

## The holy trinity of Italian motor racing

Monza, the Parabolica, and a Ferrari – on pole position, no less. If there's such a thing as a holy trinity of Italian motor racing, this is it. There are a number of ways you can approach a shot from the famous tower at this corner (recently renamed in honour of the late Michele Alboreto).

Conventionally you would do a pan shot from a frontal angle on a slow shutter speed so you get a speed blur with just the driver's helmet sharp. But I went for a different angle and faster speed to make use of the afternoon light, which plays nicely over the lines of this car. This is Sainz's pole lap; I could hear the crowd go crazy as he crossed the line.



### Photographer

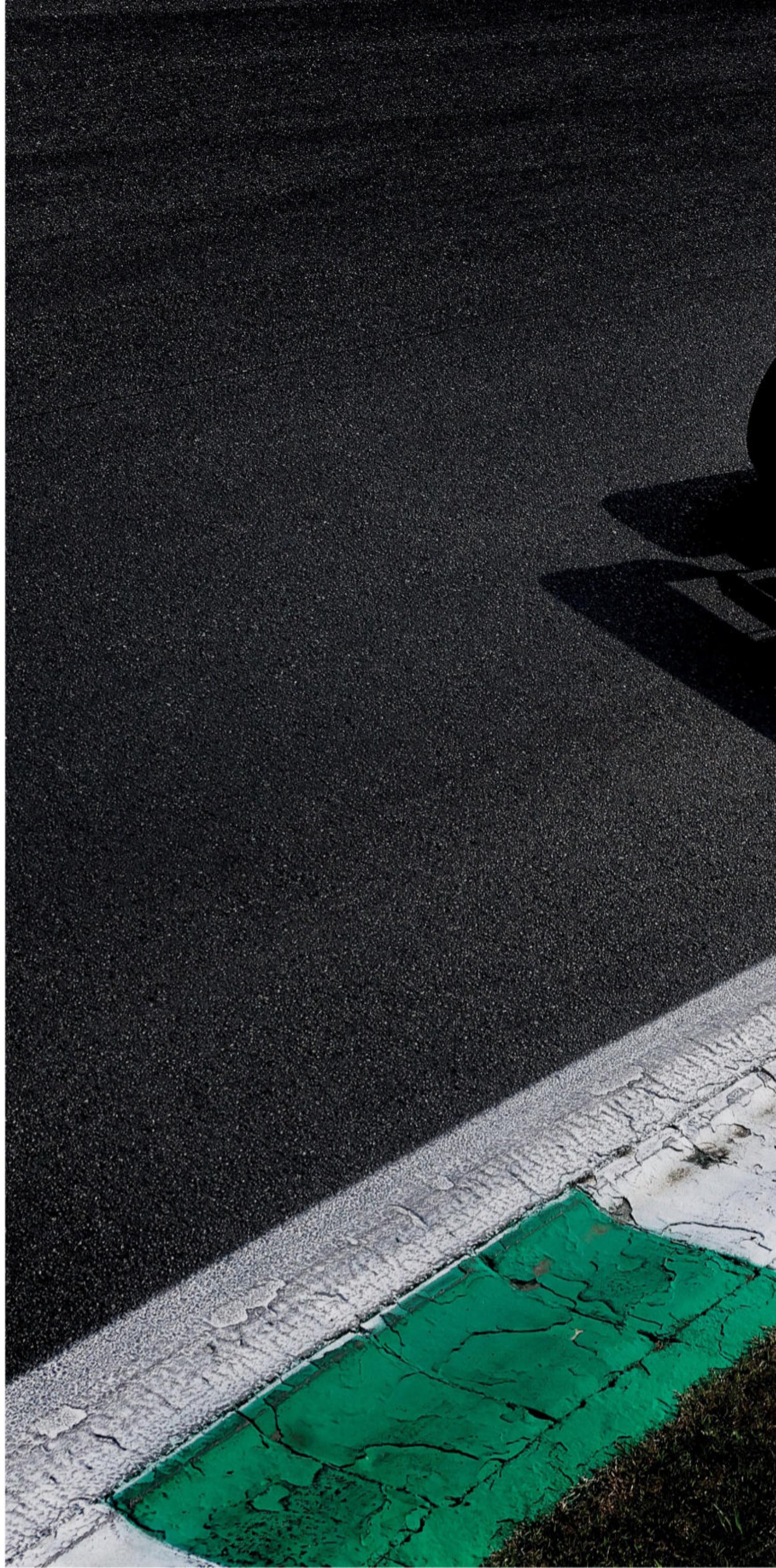
Steven Tee

**Where** Monza, Italy

**When** 4:58pm, Saturday

2 September 2023

**Details** Canon EOS R3  
24-70mm lens, 1/33000th @ F4









## Scarlet fever for Charles and Carlos

Ferrari really wanted to make an impact at the team's home race, with a special colourway for the cars and the drivers' overalls. And, of course, fresh engines in each car and a super-low-downforce aero package developed just for this kind of circuit. After all, Italy expects...

Much is made of the rivalry between Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz and, certainly, when their visors are down they'll fight each other and moan to the pitwall while they're at it. But they're also well aware of who they drive for. Charles went all out for pole, then got beaten to it by Max Verstappen, so he was absolutely delighted when Carlos ensured a Ferrari started at the front. You could tell by their body language in parc fermé how pleased both drivers were.



### Photographer

Simon Galloway

**Where** Monza, Italy

**When** 5:02pm, Saturday

2 September 2023

**Details** Nikon Z9

400mm lens, 1/1250th @ F4.5





Put your hand up  
if you're on pole

The first chicane at Monza is a great place to stand and appreciate the performance of a Formula 1 car. Incredible deceleration as they slam on the brakes from top speed, then the chirrups of protest from the tyres as they scrabble to put down all that power at the exit. And of course, for photographers, there's always the chance of someone overcooking it here – especially on a qualifying lap.

At this point, at the end of the session, I was going for a panning shot on a slower shutter speed to make use of the blend of colours in the grandstand in the background. Luckily Carlos not only put his car on pole, he had his arm in the air at just the right moment. And the crowd were going wild...



**Photographer**  
Jake Grant

**Where** Monza, Italy  
**When** 5:00pm, Saturday  
2 September 2023

**Details** Canon EOS-1DX MkII  
70-200mm lens, 1/60th @ F10

# HOW THE DRIVER MARKET STALLED

**01**

## No shock moves, no sudden retirement

announcements, no heated confrontations between teams over a driver's services – this year's 'silly season', unlike last year's, has been relatively quiet. The main reason for the calm is likely that market momentum – a factor of drivers' keenness to move – is temporarily becalmed: but it will engage again ahead of the change in regulations scheduled for 2026, which could shake up the competitive order.

Any lingering doubts there could still be major bombshells have been dispelled by the announcement that both Lewis Hamilton and George Russell will continue to race for Mercedes until the end of 2025. There were virtually no questions asked about the latter's future.

## LEWIS HAMILTON AND GEORGE RUSSELL WILL CONTINUE TO RACE FOR MERCEDES UNTIL THE END OF 2025

It was already understood that Russell was contracted to race for Mercedes until at least the end of the 2024 season, as part of the long-term deal he signed when joining the team back in 2021.

And as for the seven-time world

champion, there was little doubt he would also remain with Mercedes, although the negotiations took a little longer than expected.

Insiders indicate the terms of Hamilton's F1 contract were agreed as far back as the Canadian Grand Prix in June – and since then only details relating to PR and marketing activities and Hamilton's putative role as a Mercedes ambassador after his F1 career has ended were being worked out.

"I think Lewis and I, we were clear on the major terms in June, July," said Mercedes boss Toto Wolff after the new Hamilton deal was announced. "And then things have been bubbling along. There was the summer break. So, at the end, it was things about marketing, not really the big relevant topics, and that took a bit of time."

As a consequence, the top teams' line-ups are almost certain to remain unchanged next year. The biggest doubts – in the form of speculation provoked by indifferent performance – have been raised about Sergio Pérez, but he has a valid contract with Red Bull and team bosses have repeatedly confirmed Checo will continue to represent the champion team next year.

**01**

## HAMILTON SIGNS ON AGAIN

Why driver moves are on pause until 2026



Unlike the last couple of seasons there will be no driver musical chairs going into 2024, as nearly of all of the teams have confirmed their driver line-ups already

At Ferrari, Charles Leclerc's and Carlos Sainz's contracts expire at the end of next year – and the Scuderia is in no rush to enter into active negotiations just yet.

Sainz's name is often mentioned among potential candidates for a place in the Audi factory team in 2026 – given his WRC champion father's links with the Volkswagen Group and the fact that Sainz himself has worked at McLaren with Andreas Seidl, who is now preparing Sauber for the future as the German manufacturer's works team. However, Sainz has already made clear he intends to stay with Ferrari, at least in the short term.

It is believed that the team's management still sees Leclerc as the long-term leader. But it's also understood Charles has already been in contact with Aston Martin, whose bosses will inevitably need to find a replacement for Fernando Alonso in the near future. The two-time world champion, who turned 42 this summer, is still performing at a high level and there is no doubt he will remain with the team next year. But it will need to find a new lead driver when Alonso decides to retire.

02

## SEND IN THE SILKS

Massa begins legal action over 2008 scandal



03

## FIA CONFIRMS COST-CAP COMPLIANCE



PICTURES: ZAK MAUGER; SAM BLOXHAM; MICHAEL POTTS

The future of Alonso's current team-mate Lance Stroll suddenly became the subject of wild speculation, prompted by *Sky Sports* commentator David Croft's on-air suggestion that Stroll could be on his way out to pursue a career in tennis. The chatter became so widespread that Lance even had to refute it on the record.

"Well, if I'm going to go on tour, I'd better work on my backhand a little bit, because I don't think I'm quite at that level yet," he joked when asked about the rumours. "I mean, I like to think I'm pretty good. But I don't know if I'm ready to go up against [Novak] Djokovic and [Carlos] Alcaraz just yet."

McLaren will also be retaining its two drivers for next season. But both Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri could be potential targets for rival teams in the future. Norris has often been linked with Red Bull; Christian Horner and Helmut Marko have already tried to secure his services twice.

Alpine will retain its full-French line-up. Pierre Gasly and Esteban Ocon have signed on for at least another year.

No other surprises are expected. Haas, predictably, has

extended the contracts of its drivers. While Kevin Magnussen has yet to deliver results, the team understands this is largely a consequence of deep-seated car problems which need to be dialled out. Nico Hülkenberg, meanwhile, has already proved that the team was not wrong in its decision to bring him in to replace Mick Schumacher (see p42).

The chances of Schumacher returning to the grid next year are not high. The only realistic option for him is Williams. But although Alex Albon's team-mate Logan Sargeant still looks out of his depth, Williams boss James Vowles is prepared to give him at least until the end of the current season.

By the time this issue of *GP Racing* went to press, there had been no official confirmation of Alfa Romeo's line-up. It's known that Valtteri Bottas has a valid contract until 2024, and Zhou Guanyu is expected to get an extension. As for AlphaTauri, its owner – Red Bull – is preparing to make a final decision later this year, with three drivers (Yuki Tsunoda, Daniel Ricciardo and Liam Lawson) vying for two seats. As is well known, three into two won't go..." ▶

# IS THE 2008 TITLE STILL IN DOUBT?

02

**In the absence of intrigue in this year's title race, there's still a championship battle to be fought: Felipe Massa has moved from words to deeds in his attempts to force F1 to adjust the results of the 2008 season. The Brazilian has assembled lawyers to annul the classification of that year's scandalous Singapore Grand Prix, which he believes would then result in the title going to him.**

The action was prompted by an interview with former F1 supremo Bernie Ecclestone earlier this year. In it, he claimed that before the end of the season he and senior FIA executives became aware of the conspiracy between Renault team bosses and their driver, Nelson Piquet Jr, which resulted in the Singapore race being won by his team-mate, Fernando Alonso. According to Ecclestone, it was then decided that to avoid a scandal the matter would not be openly investigated. Details of the conspiracy did not emerge in public until much later.

"We wanted to protect the sport and save it from a huge scandal," Ecclestone was quoted as saying. "That's why I used angelic tongues to persuade my former driver Nelson Piquet [Nelson Jr's father] to keep calm for the time being. Back then, there was a rule that a world championship classification after the FIA awards ceremony at the end of the year was untouchable. So, [Lewis] Hamilton was presented with the trophy and everything was fine.

"We had enough information in time to investigate the matter. According to the statutes, we should have cancelled the race in Singapore under these conditions."

Ecclestone's words, along with an archival recording of an interview with the late Charlie Whiting in which he admitted to knowing about the conspiracy before the start



**Massa and Hamilton (below) before the 2008 Brazilian GP finale. Massa was emotional after losing out in Brazil (above) but has now sought to rectify that hurt...**



of the 2008 decider, prompted Massa to consider his legal challenge. Before Piquet's crash, Felipe was leading the race, but Ferrari's mistake at the pitstop after the Safety Car came out denied him the chance to score and Massa eventually lost the title to Hamilton by a single point.

Massa stated his intentions to seek a review of the championship results in April and, in August, sent a so-called Letter Before Claim to the FIA and FOM, in which both organisations were called to answer.

The legal system built around F1 suggests it is impossible to revise the championship results after the official awards ceremony has taken place, but Massa's lawyers believe they have evidence to get the results of Singapore excluded from the championship, theoretically handing the title to him. Massa is also seeking financial compensation, although insists that is not his main aim.

The situation is complicated by the fact that Whiting, then F1's race director, and FIA president Max Mosley are no longer among the living. But Massa's lawyers say there is evidence to show that both of them, along with Ecclestone, knew what had happened before the start of the decisive race in Brazil. Bernie now claims to have no recollection of the circumstances of 2008 or the interview.

It's understood the FIA and F1 have now asked Massa and his lawyers for more time to prepare their response – and it's believed that it has been agreed that such a response will be given by mid-October.

"If their response is adequate, and if they approach us for any conversation, that's OK," said lawyer Bernardo Viana, who represents Massa. "If it is not, if their response is not adequate, we're just going to move forward with the legal strategy we have in place." ▶

## NEWS IN BRIEF... NEWS IN BRIEF...NEWS IN BRIEF...

### CIRCUITS



ZANDVOORT'S PITLANE, one of the shortest and tightest of the circuits used on the Formula 1 calendar, is to undergo an extension for 2024. Six extra pit garages will be added to the existing ones, down towards the first corner.

### ROBBERY

Carlos Sainz was robbed outside his Milan hotel after the Italian GP. Sainz had an expensive watch stolen but, along with his personal trainer, apprehended one of the three assailants. The others were caught by other members of Sainz's team and all were

### charged by the police.

The watch was also recovered.

### DRIVERS

Daniel Ricciardo is expected to be out of action until at least the Qatar GP on 8 October as he recovers from his broken hand. Liam Lawson will deputise until he returns.

### RACES

The FIA is expected to decide soon whether Italy will be able to retain two GPs past 2025. Both Imola and Monza have contracts to 2025, but it seems likely that Imola will be shelved after that, especially as Monza is about to start a programme to upgrade its facilities.



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# ALL TEAMS COMPLY WITH COST CAP

03

**The FIA has announced that** all 10 Formula 1 teams have complied with the championship's financial regulations for 2022, meaning none will be penalised.

This follows last year's controversy when two teams were ruled to have committed cost-cap breaches in 2021. The biggest debate surrounded Red Bull Racing, which was found to have overspent by around \$1.8m. This resulted in a \$7m fine and a 10% reduction in its allotted aerodynamic testing for a defined "Minor Overspend Breach" – meaning one amounting to less than 5% of the total cost-cap value.

The FIA's statement came as a surprise to many after months of speculation that several teams were being investigated for potential breaches in 2022. Earlier this year, the FIA had issued a specific directive banning the transfer of intellectual property from teams' non-F1 activities back into their grand prix operations, which is believed to be the main grey area in the regulations.

As reported by *GP Racing*'s sister website *Autosport.com*, the FIA has increased the number of full-time staff in its Financial Regulations Department from four to 10 for this year, and teams have been subjected to a rigorous audit process. Team chief financial officers were given multi-page questionnaires with more than 100 points of clarification requested for their submissions, and factory visits by FIA representatives included extensive interviews with staff.

In the end the FIA emphasised that, having examined all non-F1 activities, no infringements had been found.

The governing body stated that: "The FIA Cost Cap Administration has issued certificates of compliance to all of the 10 competitors. The review has been an intensive and thorough process, beginning with a detailed analysis of the documentation submitted by the competitors. Additionally, there has been an extensive check of any non-F1 activities undertaken by the teams, which comprised multiple on-site visits to team facilities and careful auditing procedures to assess compliance with the Financial Regulations."

The news means there will be no repeat of last year's controversy surrounding Red Bull, when there were also questions raised over how news of the breach became common knowledge ahead of the announcement.

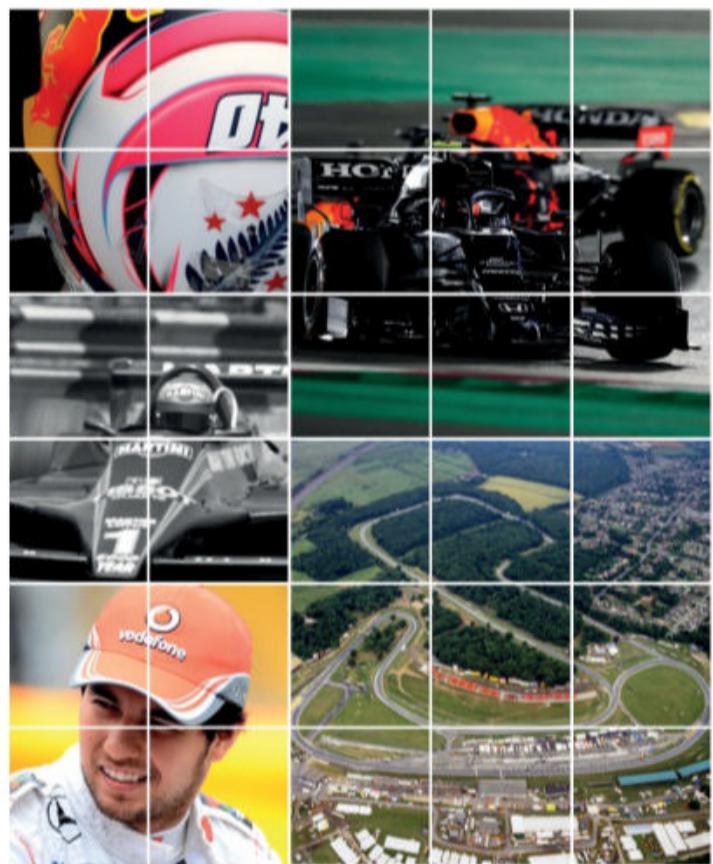


**TEAM CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICERS WERE GIVEN MULTI-PAGE QUESTIONNAIRES WITH MORE THAN 100 POINTS OF CLARIFICATION REQUESTED**

# F1 MASTERMIND

Your chosen specialised subject:  
the world's greatest motorsport

- Q1** How many times has Max Verstappen not been on the podium of a full GP since the start of 2020?
- Q2** Which American driver has made the most GP starts: Mario Andretti or Eddie Cheever?
- Q3** How many drivers have raced for Mercedes since it returned to F1 in 2010: 5, 6 or 7?
- Q4** Liam Lawson became the 10th driver from New Zealand to start a world championship F1 race when he raced in Holland, but who was the ninth?
- Q5** Pierre Gasly has a win and three podiums in F1, but in which race did he start from the front row?
- Q6** Who am I? I started 246 GPs from 1994 to 2008 for Williams, McLaren and Red Bull, winning 13 times and claiming 12 pole positions.
- Q7** Who were the five German drivers on the grid for the 2007 European GP at the Nürburgring?
- Q8** Brands Hatch hosted only 14 world championship GPs. Nigel Mansell won two of them but who is the only driver to win three GPs at the Kent circuit?
- Q9** Which driver claimed the first and last of Benetton's 27 Formula 1 wins?
- Q10** How many points did Sergio Pérez score in his only season at McLaren in 2013: 25, 49 or 60?



**1 Nine** Eddie Cheever (132 to 128) **3 5 4** Brendon Hartley  
**5 2021 Qatar GP** **6** David Coulthard **7** Markus Winkelhock  
**8** Niki Lauda **9** Gerhard Berger **10** 49  
 Nico Rosberg, Adrian Sutil, Ralf Schumacher, Nick Heidfeld



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# THE F1 ANALYST

BEN EDWARDS

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## CRUNCH TIME FOR YUKI TSUNODA AS HOME RACE BECKONS

As F1 returns to Asia for races in Singapore and Japan Yuki Tsunoda will be relishing the additional support from fans during a crucial stage in his career. The 23-year old is in his third season with AlphaTauri but the connection with the overall management goes back to 2019 when he became a member of the Red Bull junior team to race in FIA Formula 3. Just one year at that level led him into Formula 2 in 2020 and an impressive season which included three victories and one point away from runner-up position to Mick Schumacher.

Yuki and Mick both stepped up to F1 in 2021 and for Tsunoda being the 65th driver in the history of F1 to score points on his debut was a good start. He played second fiddle to Pierre Gasly for two years and then became AlphaTauri's number one at the start of this year when Nick de Vries was introduced to full-time F1. Tsunoda scored the only points for the team while they were together and



Tsunoda finished 13th at Suzuka in 2022, his only F1 appearance so far in front of his home crowd

outqualified De Vries eight times in 10 attempts.

It was a good first part of the season but the challenge altered when Daniel Ricciardo took over from de Vries. Tsunoda now finds himself part of a triangle of Red Bull drivers who have eyes on being Max Verstappen's partner at the top team. Sergio Pérez already has that ongoing contract but there are questions over his qualifying pace and consistency; and, for Red Bull, a contract is always adjustable. Hence the plan was developed for Daniel Ricciardo to be analysed alongside Tsunoda, yet from Yuki's point of view this is the crucial time to establish how far he has developed.

Japanese F1 commentator Kazuhito Kawai has seen some ups and downs from the nation's young hero: "He has matured a bit this year, he's got good one-lap speed and I was impressed with his race pace in Spa. But when he lost some points in Spain after a penalty for allowing no space for Zhou

Guanyu, it led him to push too much for a few races."

There was a similar reactive style in Hungary, the first race Yuki shared with Ricciardo. An error in first practice wiped off the only new front wing available and he was frustrated with the team after the chequered flag, complaining about strategy on the radio.

"He's a very emotional guy," says Kaz, "and aggressive. He needs to calm down. In terms of a race weekend, he needs to think long-term."

There have been some of those better weekends already, but is he in the right position to be promoted from AlphaTauri to Red Bull?

"Having said he has matured, he's not really capable yet of a second seat to Max. Whoever has that role has to be mature enough, have mental self-control and has to be there at 95% all the time. Not many drivers are capable of doing that next to Max, who is always at 100%!"

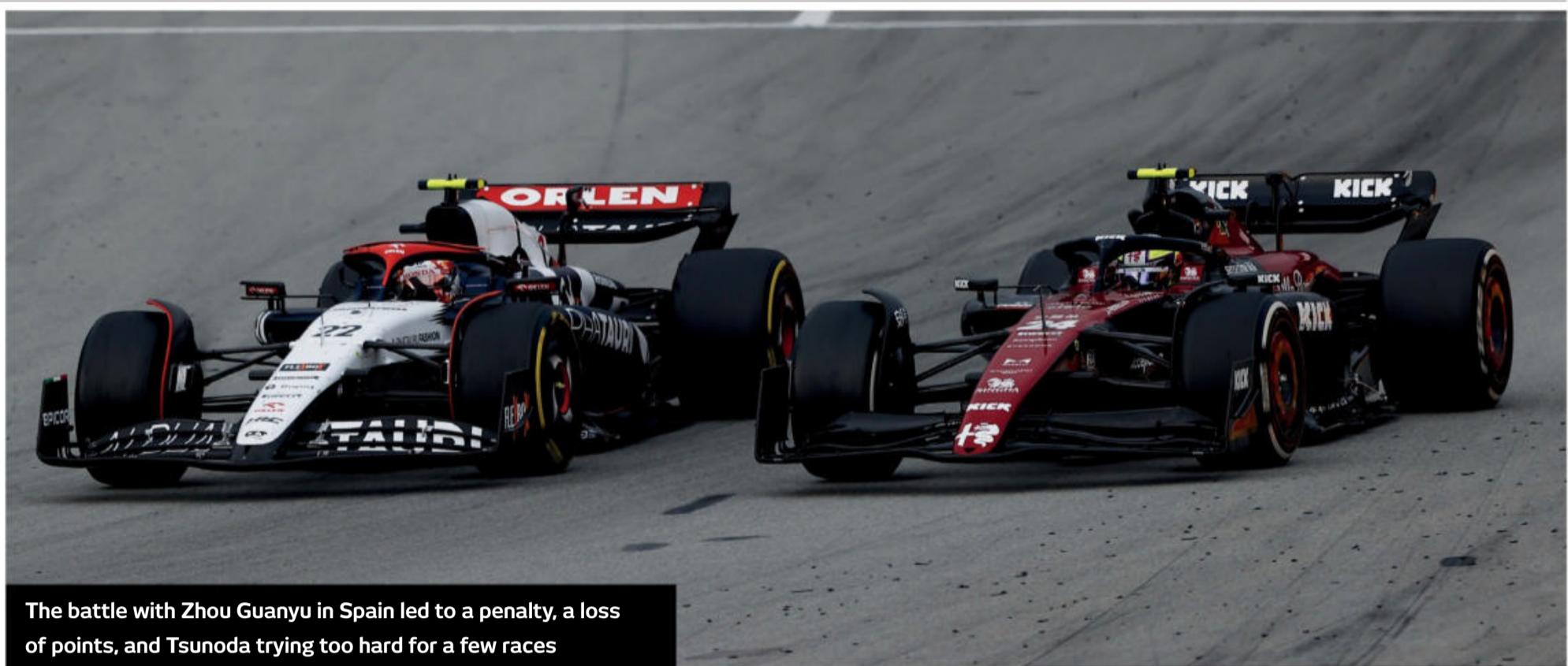
It's a very relevant point, and one that Red Bull has seen over years of promoting drivers from AlphaTauri (or Toro Rosso as the team was originally known) only to be disappointed and drop them back down again. Daniil Kvyat, Pierre Gasly and Alex Albon all suffered painful moments in their Red Bull days yet one of the best to step up as a potential back-up to a well-established world champion was Daniel Ricciardo.

Like Tsunoda, he gained points in his first race with Toro Rosso in 2012, and although he was outscored by team-mate Jean-Éric Vergne in that first year, in 2013 Ricciardo outqualified Vergne 15-4 and beat his points score by 50%.

Daniel's performances saw him promoted to Red Bull and a fantastic season in 2014, when he won three races while his new partner and superstar of the previous four years Sebastian Vettel failed to win. It was the first of five seasons during which he blended with the crew and performed at a high level even when he suddenly had to cope with the ferocious young talent of Max Verstappen.

The fact that Ricciardo got frustrated and left Red Bull at the end of 2018 was totally understandable. And yet racing for Renault/Alpine and McLaren didn't work out. He never blended in quite the same way, never looked as comfortable as he had been with Red Bull.

Returning to the Red Bull family has put the grin back on Dan's face and he was on the case in Hungary when the opportunity arose to replace de Vries. But it hasn't all gone to plan. Spa was tricky and the injury to his hand in Zandvoort has put a dent in his schedule. For Tsunoda it means there is another opportunity to shine over an F1 novice but Liam Lawson has won three Super Formula races in Japan this year and is still hunting for the title while also delivering some impressive laps in the AlphaTauri. The game to be Verstappen's right-hand man is still on.



**The battle with Zhou Guanyu in Spain led to a penalty, a loss of points, and Tsunoda trying too hard for a few races**

**In his first two years in Formula 1 Tsunoda's team-mate at AlphaTauri was the more experienced Pierre Gasly**



**Tsunoda started brightly in F1 and was the 65th driver to score points on debut, in Bahrain in 2021**



**A race winner in his only year in F2, Tsunoda finished the season third in the championship**





# UNDER THE HOOD

PAT SYMONDS

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## CLUTCH CONTROL: THE SECRETS OF ENGAGEMENT

Components that are hidden deep in the car are often overlooked and yet play a vital part in providing function with performance. One such item is the clutch.

The clutch in a Formula 1 car performs a similar function to that of the clutch in a road car in that it provides a coupling between the engine and, ultimately, the road wheels. An automotive clutch is a friction device connecting the engine to the transmission: it's capable of slipping and hence can provide an infinitely variable ratio between the two, ranging from the engine turning and the gearbox input shaft stationary when the clutch is disengaged to a one-to-one ratio when the clutch is fully engaged, and the gearbox input is rotating at the same speed as the engine.

This ability to slip allows the driver to pull away from rest by gradually engaging the clutch and thereby altering the amount of slip, effectively



**A normally hidden AP Racing F1 clutch. AP supplies carbon clutches to eight of the 10 teams on the F1 grid**

altering the ratio of engine speed to gearbox speed until the clutch is fully engaged. The difference between clutch use in a racing and a road car occurs not at the start but during gear shifts. In a road car the clutch is fully disengaged to make a shift, thereby allowing the gearbox shafts – aided by synchromesh – to synchronise their speed when engaging another gear.

On an F1 car this isn't necessary since the complex control electronics will ensure that when a gear change is called for, the next gear is engaged when the drive dogs on the gears are in exactly the right place, negating the need for the clutch to

disengage and providing what are termed 'seamless shifts'. Such a shift ensures there is effectively no loss of drive during an upshift. In effect this control is an extremely fast-acting electronic analogy of the mechanical synchromesh used in road cars.

The architecture of a road clutch and a Formula 1 clutch are similar, but the differences are significant. A road car clutch consists of a friction plate which is pushed against the engine flywheel by a diaphragm spring. The friction plate has splines at its centre hub which are connected to the gearbox input shaft. This gives a path for the engine torque from the crankshaft to the flywheel and then via the clutch-driven plate to the gearbox, before finally being transmitted

to the wheels. To disengage the clutch on a road car the driver presses the clutch pedal, which moves a piston in a hydraulic cylinder or operates a cable which is connected to a release bearing mechanism that bears on the clutch diaphragm spring. Pressing the pedal pushes the centre of the diaphragm spring which then pivots around a fulcrum, releasing the pressure on the clutch plate. The road car clutch will have a housing made of pressed steel and the clutch plate will have an organic friction material similar to that of a brake pad. For a mid-sized family car, the clutch may be 240mm diameter and would weigh over 5kg. Its torque capacity would be around 450Nm.

The Formula 1 clutch is a highly developed version of this but the release mechanism pulls on the diaphragm spring fingers rather than pushes on them, which allows a smaller diameter and lighter weight design as well as enhancing the cooling. It is much smaller in diameter, between 100 and 110mm; and, rather than a single clutch plate, it would have four or five driven plates internally splined to the gearbox input shaft. These act against similar alternately spaced plates externally splined to the clutch housing. The torque capacity of a clutch is a function of the plate type and area and the number of plates as well as the diaphragm spring load rating.

Despite its tiny size, a Formula 1 clutch will handle 2,000Nm of torque. The small diameter allows the engine to be mounted low in the car and the clutch would be much lighter at around 1.5kg because the housing is made from titanium and the friction



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The first F1 clutch to be made out of carbon was used by Williams in 1983

F1 clutches, used for starts and reversing only, are operated by paddles on the back of the steering wheel



A clutch on a road car is needed to ensure smooth gearshifts, something no longer needed in an F1 car



plates from carbon. This all adds up to lower rotational inertia which benefits acceleration. It's often not appreciated that rotational inertia kills acceleration just as weight does. Furthermore, the inertia of the engine or clutch is seen at the wheels as the square of the total gear ratio. An F1 clutch has an inertia value of around  $.0066\text{kgm}^2$  which is around one tenth of that of a road car. Without wishing to put equations in this column it can be

shown that as our Formula 1 car accelerates, the inertia of the clutch is resisting the acceleration in a similar manner to adding 8.5kg of mass to the car. Even a small to mid-size road car has a clutch inertia which would equate to adding 85kg to the car so it's easily seen why the reduction in inertia of the clutch is even more important than the reduction in weight.

The engineering behind the massive

reduction in size of clutches is very much down to the development of carbon friction surfaces which were developed alongside carbon brakes, the materials being very similar. Prior to this the friction materials for racing clutches were a mixture of copper, iron, bronze and silicon dioxide sintered onto a backing plate. While superior to the organic facings, they were still temperature limited with friction fading at less than 1,000C. Carbon

## THE MASSIVE REDUCTION IN SIZE OF CLUTCHES IS VERY MUCH DOWN TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CARBON FRICTION SURFACES

materials can easily handle this temperature which can often occur during a launch. Even the hubs and clutch cover can see 500C on a bad day.

A carbon clutch was first run on a Williams car in 1983 and, by the mid 1980s, was accepted as the norm. Tilton, ZF and AP Racing were all in the early development race but now AP Racing supplies eight out of the ten teams and celebrated its 865th win with a carbon clutch in Abu Dhabi last year.



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# STRAIGHT TALK

MARK GALLAGHER

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## WHY FOOTBALL HAS POSED DIFFICULT QUESTIONS FOR FORMULA 1

The list of creditors owed money following the collapse of W Series makes for depressing reading. I know several of them and suspect some can ill-afford to write-off such losses.

While founder Catherine Bond Muir and her team fought the good fight to establish W Series as the principal route for women racers to pursue their careers, there is no avoiding the fact that the series failed commercially. This happened despite W Series being invited to support selected F1 events. The championship also achieved good traction with media and plenty of support among the new audiences of young, female fans which are a notable feature of F1's recent growth.

Although some sponsors did lend it support, notably F1's major partner Heineken, the cash never flowed in the quantities needed.



**The success of the Women's World Cup (top) and failure of the W Series (above) should start a wider discussion about female participation in motorsport**

As we've seen on numerous occasions, from A1GP to Grand Prix Masters and Superleague Formula, the commercial realities of launching a new series are daunting.

The late Jack Cunningham of A1 Team Malaysia, one of A1GP's more commercially astute franchise

holders, once likened starting a championship to making a bucket with an integrated hole in the bottom. Filling it will take some doing, and the financial drain will be relentless.

With W Series' passing, attention has shifted to the F1 Academy, its objective being much broader as it seeks to increase "the female talent pool in motorsport both on and off-track". Its inaugural racing series in many ways picks up where W Series left off, providing a female-only championship with all-important F1 support under the direction of Susie Wolff.

Meanwhile the FIA has launched the fourth edition of its Girls on Track – Rising Stars programme in collaboration with the Ferrari Driver Academy and supported by the Iron Dames project, brainchild of the President of the FIA Women in Motorsport Commission Deborah Mayer.

Given the above, there is much to suggest that top-flight motorsport is heading in the right direction as regards female participation. In F1 the number of women in senior engineering and technical roles is mirrored in the world of broadcasting. To Natalie

Pinkham, Rachel Brookes, Lee McKenzie and Danica Patrick have been added the now-familiar voices of Naomi Schiff, Bernie Collins, Laura Winter and Rosanna Tennant.

Yet, after watching the impact of the FIFA Women's World Cup, the fervour in Australia for the Matildas and the huge support for the Lionesses, it's hard not to ponder if Formula 1 is simply not moving fast enough. Liberty Media must surely look at the 1.6 million World Cup ticket sales and record-breaking viewing figures and wonder how Formula 1 can accelerate women racing in the world championship.

It raises the question of segregation versus integration.

Is Karel Komárek's More Than Equal initiative to discover Formula 1's first female F1 world champion the right approach, given that only 34 of the 773 male competitors since 1950 have won a title? Should the first woman to race in contemporary F1 also be expected, indeed demanded, to win a world championship?

The success of the Women's World Cup begs the question as to whether the initiatives across the sport are accelerating us towards a day when a woman will race in F1, or preventing the creation of a successful women's world championship in its own right. A heresy, perhaps, but the success of this year's World Cup should prompt a wider discussion about motorsport's strategies to offer women genuine opportunities to compete at world level.





# McLAREN'S MISSING PIECES

The statistics are real: McLaren has found in the region of a second a lap, transforming one of the slowest cars of the season into one of the fastest. But as **Andrew Benson** reveals, the roots of this turnaround lie in a key discovery last season – and there's a lot more performance left to find...

PICTURES  **motorsport  
IMAGES** AND McLAREN

## McLAREN HAS TRAVELED A LONG, HARD ROAD

this last decade, to such an extent that it had begun to look as if, however big the team's ambition, it might never get back to what it considers its rightful place at the front of the Formula 1 field.

No longer. For this storied team has undergone a remarkable transformation this summer. From openly warning at the launch of its car that it was going to be rubbish at the start of the season (a prediction that was bang on the mark), since the Austrian Grand Prix it has had the outright second-fastest car in the field.

The statistics are eye-opening. Before Austria, McLaren's average deficit to pole position was 1.127 seconds a lap. From Austria until the time of writing at the end of August, even counting only dry sessions and therefore ignoring the rain-affected ones in Spa and Zandvoort where it qualified second fastest and close to Red Bull, it was 0.235secs.

Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff has said McLaren's upgrade – which focused on changes to ➤

the floor and front wing – had brought a second a lap. The data proves he is about right. It has been one of the most remarkable in-season turnarounds in F1 history.

From starting the season with one of the slowest cars on the grid, Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri were suddenly regular candidates for the front row if the second Red Bull driver Sergio Pérez made mistakes, as has become a frequent occurrence this year.

So how has McLaren done it?

## FRENCH LESSONS

The story starts more than a year ago, at the 2022 French Grand Prix. McLaren introduced its first big upgrade package of the season and Zak Brown, chief executive officer of McLaren Racing, was disappointed. Brown says this was “a big moment”.

“We had upgrades, but the race was a non-event, and I didn’t like how we responded to that,” he says.

“We were late with those upgrades – other people were bringing them to Spain. They were not that effective. And the response is where I thought: ‘Right, this is a problem. Why are we not all hands on deck on Monday morning, saying: ‘We’ve got a problem?’”

Outwardly, the big focus on McLaren at this point was over the future of Daniel Ricciardo. Behind the scenes, Brown “started having conversations of: ‘I’m not happy with what I’m seeing.’” In essence, he was beginning to doubt the leadership of the team at the highest levels.

Fast forward to the days immediately following the end

**Team principal Andrea Stella (below, left) with Zak Brown. The choice of Stella to replace Andreas Seidl was another part of the jigsaw completed**

PICTURES: MARK SUTTON; GLENN DUNBAR



**McLaren knew that the MCL60 which it started the season with was flawed and needed upgrading, even before testing in Bahrain confirmed matters**

of the season. Ferrari had removed Mattia Binotto as team principal after its championship challenge had imploded, and it wanted Frédéric Vasseur from Alfa Romeo as his replacement.

Alfa – or Sauber as it really is – was in the process of being taken over by Audi for the German car giant’s entry into Formula 1 in 2026. McLaren team principal Andreas Seidl had already told Brown that he was going to join Audi after the end of his contract in 2025.

Rather than hold Seidl to his contract, Brown saw an opportunity and decided to make the move happen right then. The man he chose as Seidl’s replacement was Andrea Stella, who was promoted from his role as performance director.

Stella is a man who had operated under the radar in F1 for much of his career, despite having a series of relatively high-profile roles. He was race engineer to Michael Schumacher, Kimi Räikkönen and Fernando Alonso at Ferrari, and then followed Alonso to McLaren at the end of 2014.

For some, this was a surprise appointment. Stella had eschewed the limelight throughout his career and avoided media commitments. Now he was being asked to lead one of the most famous teams in the sport.

But Brown had no doubts, and those who had come into contact with Stella could see why. The Italian is one of the most remarkable personalities in F1, intelligent, perceptive, thoughtful and eloquent.





**“I SEE THE TEAM AND THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE, AND THEN THE FIRST QUESTION IS: ‘HOW DO I USE THIS INCREDIBLE RESOURCE?’”**

ANDREA STELLA

Brown says: “Why Andrea? He’s extremely hard-working. He is very committed to the team. His presence at the factory. He’s a great communicator. He’s a great listener. He is very tough, but very concerned with the team’s wellbeing. Here’s a guy who is willing to drive a performance culture, lead by example, work very hard, communicate, listen and just really create a great team.”

Brown asked Stella to “dig into what was going on”, and after a few weeks of conversations he concluded McLaren was wasting its best resources.

Stella is also a modest man. “When you ask me, ‘how have you done it?’” he says, “it makes me very uncomfortable to think that there is a single person. As soon as I think, ‘What have I done?’ I see the people around me. I see the team and the resources you have available, and then the first question is: ‘How do I use this incredible resource?’”

“So immediately you start a stream of reflection on how do we get the most out of 750 people? And as soon as you do that, you start involving people who can support you in this

process. So immediately it was always Zak, always on my side, my main point of reference. We have been in this journey hand in hand.”

Stella also points to chief people officer Daniel Gallo, “incredibly talented as to people – and it becomes a three-headed conversation. There is nothing that is a single-person thought or action. This is an essence of my philosophy – just involve people.”

## REALITY BITES

These conversations led Stella and the McLaren management to a realisation: there needed to be a fundamental restructure of the technical team, which in turn has allowed much more to be extracted from fundamentally the same group of engineers.

Stella says that former technical director James Key was initially involved in these conversations. “In fairness,” Stella says, “even in my conversations with James at the time, James was very honest in saying this rate of development isn’t good enough. There was a fundamental agreement as to the fact we were not developing fast enough.”

The decision was made for Key to leave the team. He would be replaced by a three-man technical leadership team focused on the key areas of F1 car design – aerodynamics, performance and concept, and engineering – all reporting to Stella, whom ➤



The first upgrades to the MCL60 appeared in Azerbaijan, but it was in Austria that the performance-altering changes materialised

Brown describes as “a technical team principal”.

It’s an unusual arrangement. On the face of it, it seems to be a combination of two structures from recent history that manifestly didn’t work – McLaren’s own discredited three-man technical leadership team from the 2010s under Ron Dennis and Eric Boullier, and Ferrari’s structure under Binotto, when it initially didn’t appoint a technical director.

Brown says: “I felt very comfortable with Andrea. Without having a single technical director, someone needs to be the ultimate decision-maker. I thought: ‘Andrea’s perfect for that.’”

Stella says: “The fact we ended up with the number three is not because you target having three different areas. You start from: ‘How do you improve the development and delivery of the car?’ So you think: ‘What are the key areas?’ And then they coincidentally happen to be three.

“What’s the most important thing in F1? Aerodynamics. Right, in aerodynamics I want to have full focus on aero, led by the most competent person I can imagine from a technical and people point of view. This person, we were lucky enough, he

Sanchez, formerly Ferrari’s chief performance engineer, joins McLaren as technical director performance on 1 January 2024. Ask Stella whether he has concerns about the fact Ferrari was both times subsequently overtaken by a competitor – Mercedes in 2017/18 and Red Bull in 2022 – and he replies that this is less important than that it saw a defining design concept early.

“At the time [for 2022], they spotted better than anyone else that the sidepods have a fundamental role in powering up the floor,” Stella says. “That’s coming to the floor with competitive ideas. But you don’t dwell there forever. You have to have the horsepower in your team to say, ‘Good, what’s next?’

“It’s now 18 months into it and in 18 months you can change everything if you want in the car. You have competitive ideas and then the structure to evolve these competitive ideas, which is what we’re trying to achieve.”

For engineering and design – “where the ideas will have to become engineering,” as Stella puts it – McLaren again went in-house and chose Neil Houldley as the third head. But then it learned Rob Marshall – chief designer at Red Bull under Adrian Newey through and beyond its first successful era in the 2010s – was available. Marshall, too, joins in January, and Houldley will be his deputy.

Brown says: “Neil totally understood that when you get a guy of Rob Marshall’s experience and calibre, it was a no-brainer. Neil was great, and he’s not going anywhere.”

## 2023: FLOORED THINKING

Stella had implemented his vision, but the immediate problem pre-season was that the 2023 car was a product of Key’s tenure. Once Stella had started the process of looking into what had gone wrong, the team soon spotted potential performance had been missed because a design direction on the floor had not been spotted soon enough.

McLaren decided honesty was the best policy and, when the media arrived at the factory for the launch in February, Brown and Stella put their cards on the table. The car will be uncompetitive, they said. But we’ve got a plan. There will be an upgrade around the time of the fourth race, and more to follow. Bear with us.

They have been true to their word. The first upgrade, introduced for the Azerbaijan Grand Prix, was a modest one to the floor edge. “It was conceptually a step up,” Stella says, “but it wasn’t necessarily a big step from a laptime point of view.”

“At Baku we were slightly more competitive, but then we went to Miami. Baku puts a lot of emphasis on straight-line braking and short corners.”

These are areas where the McLaren is strong. Where it’s weak is in braking-and-turning – always a problem with Pirelli tyres – and off-throttle cornering. In other words, the longer the corner – the more time a driver spends off-throttle or on part-throttle – the worse it is.

“Miami, long corners,” Stella says, “we realised we hadn’t changed things substantially. So in February we were not yet working on the Austria upgrade.”

“This has been the result of the overhaul of the technical



Lando Norris confirmed that the team was on the right track with second at the British GP after leading the opening laps, with rookie team-mate Oscar Piastri a strong fourth

was already in-house. It’s Peter Prodromou.”

Prodromou, who was poached from Red Bull in 2014, had been sidelined under Key.

Stella continues: “Then you think: ‘Right, but I need to look forward. There is 2026 coming. There is a need to look from a conceptual point of view what others are doing currently. Good. I want to have someone fully focused on this and he only thinks night and day on concept and assessing performance.’

“So we thought: ‘Who is the best guy from a conceptual point of view?’ And we realised that in periods of regulation changes, both times Ferrari had the best car, they won [races], 2017 and 2022. So let’s see what David [Sanchez] thinks about his future.”



PICTURES: STEVEN TEE

**Targeting the Austrian GP for the major upgrades to the MCL60 introduced a modicum of uncertainty as the team has always gone well at the Red Bull Ring**

structure and Peter Prodromou and his aerodynamic group realising we need to flick into something more powerful here.

“Especially Peter; he had really valid ideas that he deployed. They put them on the table and the aerodynamic group, we talk about 100 people. If you get the most out of 100 people, it’s a lot of output, but you need to work on the right concepts.”

## SECOND-STEP NERVES

When Stella started talking about the existence of this second step, in the late spring, Brown was nervous. “I thought it was brave of Andrea, because he was pretty bullish with the media,” Brown says. “He was like, ‘Stay tuned for Austria.’ Coming out of France [2022]...”

Brown need not have worried. Again McLaren has delivered. The Austria upgrade – a fundamental redesign of the floor shape under the car, including entry fences, the floor edge and diffuser design, a Red Bull-style sidepod inlet and new external sidepod shaping – was a revelation.

Still there was caution. “It is just the track?” Brown says.

“We’re always pretty good in Austria. Lando’s pretty good around there. So it took a couple of races to go: ‘Actually, this is a substantially better race car.’”

The drivers say that the car behaviour has not fundamentally changed, it has just got more downforce, and they would like improvements in its areas of weakness. But all F1 cars are imperfect on the limit and can be improved. It’s a driver’s job to point out what those imperfections are. The team will work on them. But what matters fundamentally is how fast a car goes within those weaknesses.

## “EXPANDING THE HORSEPOWER OF LEADERSHIP”

Meanwhile, Stella has continued to make tweaks to the team to enhance what he calls a “high-performance environment”.

In Miami, two-time Indycar champion and 2003 Indy 500 winner Gil de Ferran was with the team. But this was not just a social visit from an old friend who had worked with Stella on

**“WE’RE ALWAYS PRETTY GOOD IN AUSTRIA. LANDO’S PRETTY GOOD AROUND THERE. SO IT TOOK A COUPLE OF RACES TO GO: ‘ACTUALLY, THIS IS A SUBSTANTIALLY BETTER RACE CAR’”**

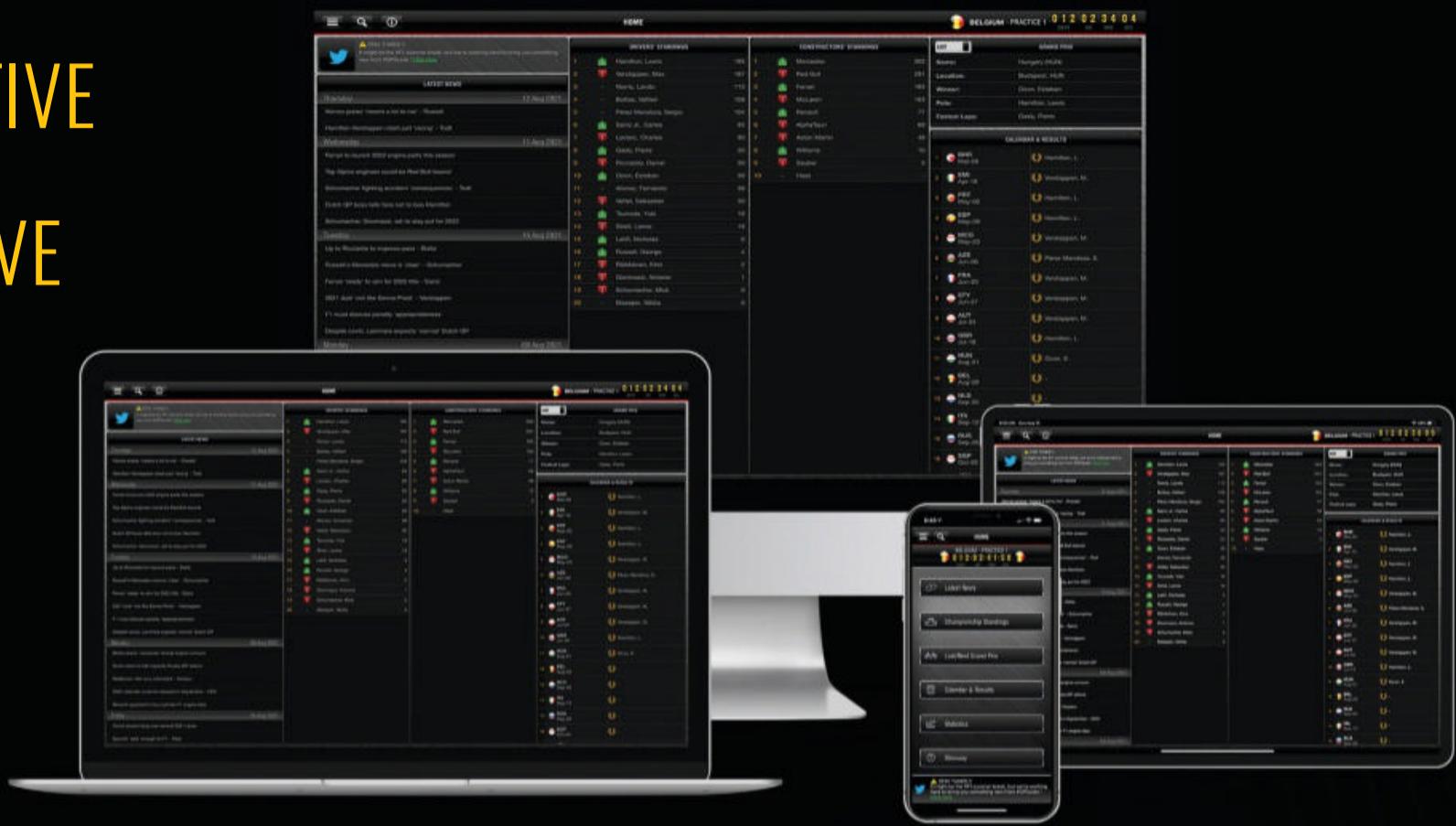
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PICTURES: MARK SUTTON; ZAK MAUGER, MICHAEL POTTS

**Correlation between windtunnel and the track has been an issue; flow-viz paint helps validate the research**

McLaren's immediate post-Dennis restructure under Brown, acted as mentor to Alonso on his Indy debut in 2017, and then helped set up the McLaren Indycar team.

Stella and de Ferran clicked back then and the Brazilian is on a multi-year contract as a consultant.

Stella says that he, de Ferran and chief operating officer Piers Thynne "form this kind of triangle which is ultimately like the head of the team. I then go hand to hand with Zak above us, but Gil, me and Piers, we are very connected, and we act almost as a single entity.

"The reason is we need to get the most out of 750 people. We have a 360-degree approach to improving McLaren. That is an enormous amount of work and it would be impossible to do that travelling to races, and even if I stayed at the factory.

"To make change happen accurately, and fast, you need to be present, to spread your influence very, very effectively, and pretty much every minute. So that's where Piers and Gil play a role. It is expanding the horsepower of the leadership.

**The team knew the upgrades had worked when Norris followed up his second in Britain with one in Hungary**



**Stella and Gil de Ferran (left) clicked back in 2017 and they form, along with Piers Thynne, a strong leadership group**

"Gil, most people know him as a champion in Indycar, but I know him for being somebody incredibly competent in motorsport, F1, strategic approach, people coaching.

"When somebody in the team has a conversation with Gil, they always come out quite inspired and like, 'Ah, I think I understand now better what I have to do.' Or with ideas, 'I think I have a concept to work on now.' And this isn't an isolated variable. It's part of having this expanded leadership, because otherwise your action is just too weak if you have a single person trying to do this."

## THE MISSING PIECES

One notable aspect of McLaren's revival this year is that it has happened while the team was going through the final stages of a major infrastructure renewal process.

McLaren has been using Toyota's old F1 windtunnel in Germany for more than a decade. The new one in the McLaren Technology Centre has been running since July but it takes time to calibrate a windtunnel before it can be used for design.

When it is, it will be a multiple benefit. McLaren is no longer paying to rent the Toyota wind tunnel, so operating costs go down. It introduces operating efficiencies. And it is state-of-the-art, rather than a 20-year-old design.

A new driver-in-the-loop simulator is close to completion. And McLaren has taken over its old factory in Woking and turned it into a new manufacturing unit, with brand new machines and a much better logistical process. All of which should add up to performance improvements.

Brown says: "Even though everything is in place now, 2024 has already started, so '24 is a bit of a hybrid year for us. We're somewhere in the middle of our 2024 car. Rob Marshall and David Sanchez, who will provide additional leadership direction, they won't start until 1 January. So we won't have everything at its full capacity until next year, which is the '25 season. We see no reason why we can't be extremely competitive in 2025." 

Andrew Benson is BBC Sport's chief F1 writer



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# CHARLES LECLERC

Ferrari's star driver speaks out about those contract rumours and explains why his team needs to follow Mercedes' lead and switch to a new car concept for next season

**There was a rumour over the summer break that you'd signed what could be a five-year contract extension with Ferrari worth up to £150 million. What's the latest on your future?**

I wish I did this deal because it looks like a good deal! But there are no new deals and no discussion whatsoever. But at some point we'll definitely have those discussions. My intentions are clear. And then on the team side, I don't know, but I'm not too worried either. But it's not a priority for now. We just want to try and work as much as possible on the car to get back to where we were last year, which was to fight for wins. Then we'll see. But at the end of the season, for sure, we'll have those discussions.

**Why wait until the season has finished? Isn't Ferrari worried another team could poach you?**

Honestly, I'm not concerned. If I was worried, I probably would have started the discussion early. But I'm not too worried. It'll be all fine. Basically, we don't speak to each other about this. Both of us have decided that way and I think it's the right way. As I said, there's no rush. I don't even have any deadlines. I still have a year and a half [with the contract expiring in 2025], which seems only a little bit in a way because I've had a contract for five years. Now we're getting closer to the end. But there's still plenty of time.

**For Ferrari to win races and titles again, is everything it needs already in place?**

We already have some really good engineers within the team. New people will only help – to have different points of view and help us grow

even better. Obviously, looking at the gap there is from Ferrari to Red Bull in race pace especially, this requires time to get back to that level of performance. We need to focus on the short-term goals in order to achieve our long-term goals, which is to be back winning races. For now, we need to improve our consistency because if you look at the first part of the season, McLaren, Mercedes, Aston Martin and ourselves were really inconsistent with who was going to be on top. If we manage to find what we have in the car that gives us the consistency to always be on top of our game, this will give us the upper hand compared with other teams. Then, of course, focus on the overall performance to try and close the gap to Red Bull. But that would be a bit later on.

**What about the longer-term plan? Are you convinced by Frédéric Vasseur's vision?**

I'm fully convinced it's the right approach. As we said earlier, we've got new engineers coming to the team. It's a constant plan for the next year to reinforce the team. This is the right way to go. So, I'm fully convinced with the vision Fréd has

for the team. We are definitely working in the right direction. Then, how long it will take? I don't know.

**Ferrari has been clear that for 2024 there will be a brand-new car concept. Does that come as a relief to you?**

It's great to hear that. Obviously, I can't wait. But first I've got a season to finish. We can only go another direction because at the moment, honestly, the car is really, really difficult to drive. It's just very difficult to be on the limit. We need to drive so far off the limit because as soon as you get close, you just really don't know what's going to happen. It's a difficult situation. With these cars, we can have some unexpected surprises because they're so sensitive. A small change can have a big positive influence. Hopefully this will be the case for us.

**Even with a new car concept, can you or anyone else catch up to Red Bull before the next major rule change in 2026?**

That's what we're trying to work towards. But for sure, they have a really big margin and it's going to be very difficult to catch them before the change of regulations. It's different than in the past in a way: in qualifying, we're much closer than we had been. Normally when we see a team dominating, it was qualifying and the race. But now for some reason with Red Bull, it's much more in the race than in qualifying. The gaps are much bigger in the race and that's why we're all working towards our race pace because Red Bull is so far ahead. There's still a lot of work to do.

**I'M FULLY CONVINCED WITH THE VISION FRÉD HAS FOR THE TEAM. WE ARE DEFINITELY WORKING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**



# DEBRIEF ENCOUNTER

You might have seen snatches of team engineering debriefs on *Drive to Survive* but for the most part their contents remain hidden, even to Formula 1's access-all-areas docu-series. Why? Because here the innermost secrets of car performance – and how to extract it – are revealed. Now, exclusively, *GP Racing* peers behind the veil...

WORDS ALEX KALINAUKAS PICTURES

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## OH TO BE A FLY ON A WALL IN

a setting as secretive as the Formula 1 paddock. Right now, perched behind a table in the computer-filled room constructed above the two Haas team trucks that form the race-weekend tyre store, *GP Racing* is finding out.

First practice for the British Grand Prix has just finished. Every F1 team is now holding the same meeting. One of 10 per weekend which are critical to the outcome of each race and their seasons overall.

The debrief. Racing engineering heaven. Or hell if things haven't gone to plan for Haas and team principal Guenther Steiner decides he needs to interject an expletive or 10. Otherwise, here it is Ayao Komatsu's show.

Haas's director of engineering sits at the head of the table in front of us alongside Steiner. Lining the table's left side from their viewpoint are Mark Slade – formerly race engineer to Kimi Räikkönen at McLaren and Lotus – and

Kevin Magnussen. On the opposite side is Gary Gannon and Nico Hülkenberg. Gannon guided Romain Grosjean and Mick Schumacher at Haas, while Hülkenberg was engineered by Slade when they both worked at Renault. Three more engineers line the table's long sides, with two tyre technicians opposite Komatsu and Steiner at the far end and, behind them, a TV screen displaying the pit garage CCTV feed.

We're just behind, trying to blend into the background, praying we don't have to sneeze...

"OK, Nico, please," says Komatsu.

And we're away, Hülkenberg explaining exactly how his VF-23 has been performing around each of Silverstone's 18 turns. We've had a preview of his feelings having listened in to Haas's radio chatter from its pitbox during FP1 (see sidebar). But this is another level of detail.

Hülkenberg is specific on every corner – explaining how the wind, as ever blustering across Silverstone's former airfield setting, is impacting the car and his feeling through each ➤

PICTURES: ANDY HONE; GLENN DUNBAR; MARK SUTTON;  
ZAK MAUGER; SIMON GALLOWAY; JAMES SUTTON





steering wheel stab. There's work to do, as Hülkenberg reckons "the whole car just doesn't feel in a happy place".

As Magnussen pores over his laptop – each driver and engineer can see all their timing data and car telemetry traces, helping to pinpoint every moment of every lap – Gannon follows Hülkenberg with what he was seeing appearing in car number 27's data and suggestions for changing its aerodynamic profile. The team will take this ever lower at Silverstone – to shed drag and try to reduce the wind buffeting.

After this, Komatsu invites four other engineers to offer their thoughts, but only a report on the various temperature sensors aboard "red car" (Hülkenberg's, Magnussen is coded "green") is required now.

Then the whole thing repeats, with Magnussen and Slade giving their FP1 feedback. It's Hülkenberg's turn to descend into his laptop screen while listening on. Following this, the whole engineering team is given a report on the wind speed and direction for various corners and how that impacts the yaw angles on each car.

"That's good data," announces Komatsu.

Now it's tyre temperature feedback – the readouts specific for each run and the track conditions, plus the state the rubber is in once it had been removed from each car. Finally, team manager Peter Crolla provides his notes on how the practice pitstops have been conducted.

That's just 10 minutes, over and out. We descend the twisting stairs and return to the Silverstone paddock with Haas media attaché Jess Borrell, to whom we must thank for our special invitation. Our mind is suitably blown at the sheer scale of the data and the accompanying details. These F1 teams, they are just so good. No one even mentioned Haas had propped up the timesheets in FP1. It's just the beginning after all.

"The debrief is very important," Steiner will tell us later in the weekend. "And sometimes you sit there and say, 'I didn't learn anything'. But you have to have it consistent, that the drivers say what they feel."

It's little wonder debriefs are "identical" at each F1 team, according to Hülkenberg. He would know – he's raced for half the grid now. The practice must be so each time to dig down into what matters for making a car faster or more stable. And this has been the same format for a generation, since the drivers were "more involved technically because sometimes they came more from a background where they themselves had to work on the car", per Steiner. This year, Haas is also urgently trying to solve its

excessive race tyre wear when running in traffic, plus address that sensitivity to wind changes.

## QUALIFYING DAY

We head back to the Haas trucks after the soaking third practice session on Saturday. We start to suspect our incognito cover has somewhat been blown when Steiner arrives a moment afterwards and fixes us with a piercing, almost demonic stare while asking: "I hope you're learning

something?!" We nod our affirmative.

Here Hülkenberg and Magnussen give their thoughts on just the handful of laps of dry running before the rain arrived.

Having listened in, Komatsu notes "Nico has got exactly the same comments" regarding Magnussen's thoughts on rear stability out of Brooklands, Luffield and through Club's multi-apexes – "we need to look at that with the aero guys, [to see] how much yesterday's conditions were really killing us". But he's pleased

**"THE DEBRIEF IS VERY IMPORTANT AND SOMETIMES YOU SIT THERE AND SAY, 'I DIDN'T LEARN ANYTHING'. BUT YOU HAVE TO HAVE IT CONSISTENT, THAT THE DRIVERS SAY WHAT THEY FEEL"**

GUENTHER STEINER





Magnussen is now happier with his car feeling after he's been switched to the setup Hülkenberg had tried on Friday.

When required next, the race engineers explain how their car aero balances change moving from dry to wet conditions. Again, things are short and precise. The feedback order mirrors post-FP1 and will do so in each debrief still to come.

Just an hour later, Haas reconvenes for a rapid two-minute pre-qualifying strategy briefing. It's lacking a certain cut-off time for the Q1 and ▶

**At the European races all of the debriefs pictured here in this feature take place in the peace and quiet of the Haas motorhome (left)**



# What happens in practice...

"Loud and clear."

Nico Hülkenberg is trundling down the Silverstone pitlane, about to head out into the sunshine beaming down on British Grand Prix first practice. His engineer, Gary Gannon, has completed the first on-track test of the weekend – the German driver's team radio is working. Which is good because that's what *GP Racing* is listening in to back in the garage.

As the American squad's mechanics immediately set about returning its white garage floor to pristine, glistening state – a set of medium-compound Pirellis having been dragged across it – Hülkenberg

is running through his engine modes and brake-balance settings. Once Gannon is satisfied they're working as expected, he's offered "two push laps or prep and push".

Hülkenberg makes a mental choice, but whatever it is matters little as he follows his opening 1m32.336s with a trip to the pits for front-wing flap adjustment. He's reported: "The balance is very odd – on the nose in high speed and off in the low speed." Gannon, having seen the "minus flap adjust" being done, orders his charge to complete a practice start and Hülkenberg is away again for the rest of his initial eight-lap run.

There's little other chatter here, bar track positioning information regarding other drivers. Nyck de Vries's Luffield spin goes unmentioned. Hülkenberg gets far fewer switch position requests than team-mate Kevin Magnussen.

Back in the pits after a third of the one-hour session, Hülkenberg

reports his balance is still feeling "the opposite of what it should do". It's particularly affecting him at Luffield, and Gannon confirms the data shows this. The specific feedback on high-speed feeling is "less on the nose" but still "quite disconnected". After a moment's pause, Gannon declares rollbar and aerodynamic balance changes, which he feels "makes it a bit of a simpler car".

At 1pm – five minutes behind the planned schedule for his second run, a regular occurrence with setup adjustments required – Hülkenberg is back out. This time it's a soft-shod flier. Having questioned a 'State of



'Charge' battery deployment setting and been told Haas is "keeping it on the safe side", he's off to his personal best 1m30.591s.

Back in the garage, Hülkenberg reports the changes have made his VF-23 "more of a known car", albeit initially "very pointy... and the understeer builds" as he traverses a run. He talks Gannon through each corner, after which the American suggests they "could carry on simplifying the car?" Hülkenberg acquiesces: "Let's run through these [changes] and see where we get".

Having been fuelled up for a third and final 11-lap run back on the mediums – the filler cap screwed back into place – Hülkenberg and Magnussen are off again. There's very little chatter – bar being informed of their pace occasionally or Hülkenberg needing to know he's shed a small aero piece on the Hangar straight, the absence of which he's soon noticing is impacting his handling.

After the flag falls, it's grid practice starts, then back to the pits. They're 19th and 20th, with Magnussen ahead, but there's no chatter – there's another place for that...



Q2 segments because of how the order can vary in drying conditions here, since the track is still drying from its FP3 dousing.

Komatsu declares they will therefore "fuel for the whole session" in Q1 and decide "just before the session" on the best tyres. With no more rain predicted, it will be up to the drivers to dictate any compound or tyre warm-up changes for the critical late Q1 runs.

"We'll adjust accordingly and take it from there – simple," concludes Komatsu, recalling the previous wet-to-dry sprint shootout qualifying in Austria, where Hülkenberg had ended up an impressive fourth in the mixed conditions.

Qualifying goes differently for both drivers, with Magnussen left stranded on track in Q1 and so qualifying last, while Hülkenberg misses Q3 by just 0.1s in 11th.

Komatsu starts off the post-qualifying debrief apologising to Magnussen – "I don't know what to say, it should never happen obviously" – before Hülkenberg feeds back on his "straightforward quali". Magnussen was still "really happy with the balance" on his two timed laps and, although he didn't run for as long, he again has feedback on his VF-23's performance in each corner.

**The problem that left Magnussen's car stranded in Q1 (left) and Kevin walking back to the pits (above) was explained in the post-quali debrief**

Even the competitive sessions are really chances to test in modern Formula 1.

After this, the reason for Magnussen's stoppage is explained as a drop in oil pressure, which opened the clutch and shut off his engine. An oil leak was subsequently found in the Haas garage and the team has already decided to fit a different engine to car 20 for the rest of the weekend.

Once again, we leave to reflect on what we've seen and heard. It's striking just how calm the whole thing is. There is absolutely no fuss. Having watched George Russell tear into Williams in such a setting in *Drive to Survive* season two, the contrast with the cool detachedness of Hülkenberg and Magnussen is stark.

They, in turn, have rather different manners of delivering feedback. Each time he speaks, Nico monologues directly into his laptop. Kev instead turns right and directs his comments to Komatsu and Steiner, with accompanying hand gestures.

**"I JUST GO INTO STARE MODE. I HAVE THE TIMING STUFF IN FRONT OF ME AND THE RACE TRACES SOMETIMES HELP TO REMEMBER WHERE I WAS AT A CERTAIN POINT"** **NICO HÜLKENGEB**

"I just go into stare mode," explains Hülkenberg. "I have the timing stuff in front of me and the race traces sometimes help to remember where I was at a certain point and what I want to bring across."

Steiner, however, has a different theory: "One is German and one is a free spirit!"

Steiner has seen Haas through its initial F1 entry era, then the occasional Magnussen/Romain Grosjean war, on into 2021's double-rookie season, Schumacher's many crashes last year and now the apparent calmness while running two seasoned pros. He can therefore compare how all that impacts these most crucial moments of information gathering. ▶



"The biggest difference that I've seen," Steiner explains, "is rookies basically give you a summary of the test programme. But it's normal and you cannot blame them.

"I haven't heard anybody getting heated with his team-mate in a debrief in a long time. Because they know there are too many people watching. And they don't want to put their guard down. [And show] that they get upset. That doesn't happen anymore. In the old days that happened. And now it's more like Ayao or me getting aggravated if somebody says something stupid."

There's one more day to go. The most important for any team: race day.

## A TALE OF TWO RACES

Ahead of the British GP, Magnussen and Hülkenberg are informed of final adjustments the team will make to its aero balance choices via front flap and steering wheel setting changes – based on the data Haas has logged across the weekend and the dry race temperatures. Then it is differential, brake balance settings, fuel levels

Alex sat in the corner at Silverstone trying not to sneeze (above left), while observing the different styles of the two Haas drivers

(adjusted for the expectation of running in traffic, with associated slipstream and DRS effects) and engine modes outlined, before the specific start procedure instructions. Crolla provides an update on receiving track limits violations "much quicker than we did last week" in the Austrian GP farce, and explains the movements of the fictional APXGP team, should either driver wonder why Brad Pitt and Damson Idris are present for the national anthem. Finally, the tyre strategy, complete with 'Safety Car windows', is outlined again: Hülkenberg set to run a hard-medium one-stopper, with Magnussen doing the reverse.

Then it's into 52 laps of action, where Magnussen completes just over half of that

Part of the post-race debrief covered how the cars were on the way to the grid (below, left) and Hulk's tyre regrets (below, right)

scrapping at the rear of the field before another engine problem ends his race. Hülkenberg tangles with Sergio Pérez early on and damages his front wing but fights back to finish 13th.

For one final time we head back to the Haas trucks, knowing we've been well and truly exposed when Hülkenberg fist bumps us on the way in (he'll also shuffle past our chair to dispose of a banana skin later, insisting politely we stay put). Magnussen, having completed his media duties much earlier, is already at his laptop alongside Slade.

Steiner arrives and gestures in commiseration to Magnussen. Last up is Komatsu, who kicks off this final meeting, by far the longest, with another apology to the Dane.

Then it's the drivers going through their races, starting with how the car behaved on their reconnoitring laps to the grid. Hülkenberg regrets starting on the hard tyres since this led to much high-speed understeer, before getting into "the Pérez situation" and how difficult the Haas becomes to control when battling another car.

Komatsu notes the "broken record" of ➤



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The debriefs have their own rhythm which doesn't change much, with team principal Steiner only contributing occasionally

comments matching those from previous races – his exasperation not with the driver but the car-handling situation Haas has grappled with through the first half of the season. He also says, “if we had a normal car, there's no chance we'd be starting on the hards”, but the team had had to guard against its tyre wear issue.

Magnussen admits he “messed up” at the start and “got caught out with the short time that you have as the last car” – not managing to select the required ‘Mode RS’ engine setting for the launch and so “obviously had a terrible start because of that – but that's my bad”.

Balance-wise, he felt things were fine after he'd got going, before reporting an odd sensation of his tyre grip levels improving once he'd been able to get their temperatures under control, at the expense of his pace.

Before the final comments come in from around the room, Hülkenberg interjects to report “one thing I forgot to say – again I look like I

**“WE JUST NEED TO BE FOCUSED ON THOSE TWO AREAS. TYRE MANAGEMENT AND WIND SENSITIVITY. OTHERWISE, IT WILL BE THE SAME AGAIN. WE NEED TO FIND SOLUTIONS...”**

**AYAO KOMATSU**

**THAT FEEDBACK NEEDS TO BECOME REALITY.**



work, and I think Kevin too, in a coal mine” regarding excess brake dust.

“With all that coming out,” he adds, “we'll have more brain damage than we already have!”

For the first time all weekend, we hear Steiner speak up on this issue.

“Normally, two or three times a year I speak in the debriefs, not more,” he later explains. “I apologised to them, that they have to breathe the dust. And guess what? On the [post-Silverstone

Pirelli test two days later completed by Hülkenberg and reserve driver Pietro Fittipaldi] test, it was fixed.”

Having heard detailed analysis on Hülkenberg's damage-related downforce loss and a slow pitstop report from Crolla, Komatsu finally invites technical director Simone Resta to explain planned updates that might assist with the problems the drivers are reporting. Floor and front-wing reviews are to be the focus ahead of the summer break.

“Thank you,” Komatsu concludes. “Thanks for putting up with it. I think the programme is 100% clear – no denial about it – we just need to be focused on those two areas. Tyre management and wind sensitivity. Otherwise, it will be the same again. We need to find solutions...”

“Regroup, go again,” agrees Hülkenberg.

We place our all-black headset back on the table between the tyre engineers and head for the stairs and our final exit. No one else leaves. Ice creams might've been distributed by Haas's hospitality staff, but there's still so much work to be done. That feedback needs to become reality.

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# ALFA MALE

As a lawyer, **Alessandro Alunni Bravi** used to fly below the radar – but in his new remit of Alfa Romeo team representative he's had to get used to being front-of-house. Over the course of a lap of the classic Targa Florio route in Sicily he explains how chasing performance took over from his previous ambition of chasing the mafia...

WORDS OLEG KARPOV

PICTURES ANDREW FERRARO







Bravi on the route of the Targa Florio, including the famous Collesano hairpin (above) in a 1969 Alfa Romeo GT 1300 Junior. The first edition of the race, in 1906, consisted of three laps of a 92-mile circuit around the whole of the island of Sicily





**T**hose who have met Alessandro Alunni Bravi will be familiar with his lawyerly facility to casually retrieve historical facts and figures from the depths of his memory.

Ask him what influenced his choice of career and two dates spring forth.

23 May 1992: Italian judge Giovanni Falcone was killed near the town of Capaci on the A29 motorway on his way from the airport to his hometown of Palermo. The explosion, which also claimed the lives of Falcone's wife and three policemen accompanying him, was so powerful that it registered on local earthquake monitors. It was an act of revenge by the Sicilian Mafia in the wake of the Maxi Trial, considered the biggest trial in world history, in which 338 members of the *Cosa Nostra* were convicted.

"On 19 July, Falcone's ally Paolo Borsellino was killed along with five members of his escort in another bombing in Palermo," Alessandro explains over breakfast with *GP Racing* at the luxurious Villa Igziea in that very city. "I was 17 at the time, and I said to myself that I wanted to study law. I wanted to become a lawyer because I have this sense of justice. I wanted to become a judge, go to Palermo, and fight against the Mafia. This was my dream."

He had another passion, though: motorsport. Growing up in Passignano sul Trasimeno in central Italy, the student of the traditional *Liceo classico*, who studied Ancient Greek, Latin, and Italian literature, spent weekends either at the Autodromo dell'Umbria in nearby Magione or mopping the floors at the factory of Enzo Coloni's Passignano-based racing team, which competed in Formula 1 between 1987 and 1991.

"I was going there with my bike," smiles Alessandro, "I could just knock on the door and ask, 'Enzo, can I watch the cars?', and he'd say, 'Yes, but first you need to do the job', so I had to sweep the floor to earn my entry ticket.

"Enzo was a family friend. My father was also passionate about motor racing. When he was younger he had a small single-seater, which he eventually sold to Enzo. And that's how Enzo started his motorsport career.

"That passion transferred to me. We were always at the circuit in Magione, and if there were no races there we'd go to see hillclimb competitions in Umbria. We also went to see Formula 2 European championship races in Misano and then at Vallelunga in 1980. There was this English team racing, Toleman, which I remembered even though I was very small at the time – later it entered Formula 1 with Candy as a sponsor. And my father had a shop selling household appliances – if you wanted to buy an oven or a TV in Passignano, you had to go to Giampaolo! He was selling Candy washing machines, too. So he wrote to his suppliers, saying, 'My son is so passionate about motorsport' and so on – I got a letter back from Toleman with a picture signed by Derek Warwick, which I now know was fake, made by some Candy sales manager to please my father. But at the time I was so happy!"

"Later, with my father, we bought an old prototype to race in the Italian championship,

and I even won the under-25 category. But we had no resources to continue. And I don't think I was a top driver."

At that point taking on the Mafia seemed the more plausible plan.

## LAWYER? JOURNALIST? BOTH?

It's no accident we're meeting up at Villa Igziea, now a five-star hotel. Built in the late 19th century, it was then purchased by Ignazio Florio junior, whose brother Vincenzo is best known as the founder of the Targa Florio road race. Accompanied by the Alfa Romeo F1 team boss, we set out from one of the Florio residences to drive part of that legendary route in a 1969 GT 1300 Junior, entrusted to us by the local Alfa Romeo club.

Alessandro never did move to Palermo to fight the mafia, but now comes to Sicily every year on holiday. His familiarity with the locale is manifest in the deft manner with which he swerves through the streets of Palermo. The Targa Florio was notoriously difficult – its earliest route was three 92-mile laps of steep, hostile mountain roads – but before we reach that terrain we must survive the attentions of the reckless descendants of Tazio Nuvolari and Alberto Ascari, who show precious little respect for our sumptuous burgundy Alfa.

"For me, this is what you need when you go on holiday," he laughs. "In Formula 1 we're always structured. But when you need to relax, you need to find the opposite! I love coming here. No rules, no efficiency, no processes!"

Alunni Bravi's path to F1 hasn't been straightforward. Having graduated with Honours in Civil Law from the University of Perugia, and got into a prestigious law firm, he suddenly – via a colleague who also happened to write for Italian magazine *Autosprint* – became a member of the fourth estate. Dealing with, as he puts it, "serious stuff" during the week as a lawyer, on weekends Alessandro wrote about racing stars of the future for karting mag *Vroom*.

"I thought we should cover some of the first steps of former karters in single-seaters," he recalls. "I remember going to Mugello, for a Formula Renault 2.0 race, and watching cars around the track at the Casanova-Savelli section. ▶

*"In Formula 1 we're always structured. But when you need to relax, you need to find the opposite! I love coming here"*

I was very impressed by this blond kid in a Manor car, called Kimi something. There was a change of asphalt on entry, right at the braking point. During practice all the drivers used to brake before the bump. Kimi, first lap, braked after it – and, boom, entered the corner sliding. ‘OK, next lap he’ll be out,’ I thought. But he repeated it again and again.

“He retired from the race but my whole article was about that kid – and of course, all the Italian guys called the editor-in-chief, crying, ‘Oh, we have no support from the media!’ But 12 months later Kimi [Räikkönen] was on the F1 grid in Melbourne with Sauber.”

Soon enough, Alessandro was hired by *Autosprint* and spent two seasons in the early 2000s covering Formula 1 for one of Italy’s biggest motorsport publications.

“I was more on the technical side, race strategies. I remember before each race we had a preview, talking about the challenges of the next circuit. I was going to Modena to meet with [former Ferrari designer] Mauro Forghieri at the golf club: we’d have a lunch, talk, and I’d be taking notes. That was a great time.”

## THE TODT CONNECTION

As we turn towards Cerdà, where the Targa Florio races began, Alessandro puts his Sicily tour-guide hat back on. “If we’d carry on, we’d end up in Cefalù,” he says. “There is a Cathedrale, *Duomo di Cefalù*, with Byzantine period mosaics, including the famous *Cristo Pantocratore*. It’s a real jewel – if it were in New York, you’d have millions of visitors there, but here in Italy sometimes we don’t take care of our heritage.” The rickety, cracked old pit building, covered with sun-bleached tarpaulin, and the abandoned Targa Florio grandstand in Cerdà serve as further examples of benign neglect.

“It took a lot of time for me to be, let’s say, forgotten as a journalist in F1,” Alessandro says as we stop. “Like if it was something negative: ‘He’s a journalist, so he can’t be a manager.’ But I was a lawyer as well. I was working with drivers, as a consultant with drivers’ management companies, with teams. Even from karting, when I was writing for *Vroom*, every time there was some legal issue, people came to me.”

After being tapped up by Pasquale Lattuneddu, Bernie Ecclestone’s right-hand man, Alunni Bravi headed to Sardinia to take care of some legal issues around European F3000’s Cagliari Grand Prix. He did – and then helped organise the event’s second edition.

He’d eventually spend three more years on Italy’s second-largest island, overseeing the World Rally Championship round, before a meeting with Italian music producer and businessman Maurizio Salvadori led to a position running a new GP2 team named after Salvadori’s Trident Music company.

In the end, an offer from Nicolas Todt to join his All Road Management company brought Alunni Bravi back into the F1 world.

“Nicolas was the one who really gave me the chance,” he says. “Not only did I have the opportunity to see him working, but he also gave me a lot of confidence to run businesses for him. I was managing drivers, we had Felipe Massa, Jules Bianchi, Pastor Maldonado. We were the exclusive agent for the [World Endurance Championship promoter] ACO, and I was in charge of all the contracts with the circuits. Then we started the ART Grand Prix team in karting, working with Charles Leclerc as one of our drivers. I remember going with Charles to a small Italian circuit in Siena for his first race outside France – and I still have the report I’d done back then for Nicolas.”

Six years working alongside Todt convinced Alessandro he was ready to strike out on his own. He admits it also took a bit of encouragement from Frédéric Vasseur, Todt’s partner at ART Grand Prix, who also used Alessandro’s services as a lawyer.

“Working with Nicolas was one of the most important parts of my professional career,” says Alunni Bravi. “I had to decide, either I want to continue being an employee, or try something on my own. Fred was really supportive in pushing me to do this step, creating my own company.”

Alessandro’s Trusted Talent Management immediately had a strong driver line-up, including Robert Kubica and Stoffel Vandoorne. But the link with Vasseur didn’t break.

“When I started my own management company,” he says, “Fred was leaving Renault and was going on a six-month gardening leave. Half a year later, he asked me to join Sauber.”

## “THE MOST CLEVER PARTNERSHIP IN 10 YEARS”

Our last stop is in Collesano for a lunch at the Ristorante Pizzeria Targa, within sight of the iconic Collesano hairpin, and a visit to Targa Florio museum featuring the relics of Alfa Romeo’s nine wins in the race – including the first one, in 1923, by Ugo Sivocci ➤





Bravi is a huge fan of Sicily as well as motorsport so a visit to the Targa Florio museum was a must. If he ever decides to step away from F1 he could probably get a job as a tour guide of the largest island in the Mediterranean





Everywhere Bravi went on Sicily there were reminders of the famous endurance event, last run as a race in 1977; our classic wheels came courtesy of the local Alfa Romeo club (opposite)



An experienced but notoriously unlucky racer, Sivocci painted a white square with a green four-leaf clover – the *quadrifoglio* – on his car’s radiator to ward off bad luck and, after his victory in Sicily, it became the symbol of racing Alfas.

“I’m passionate about motorsport,” says Alessandro as we peruse the museum’s exhibits. “It’s not something you can hide. But my working style comes from law – it made me who I am, as an individual. Passion is something that makes you work with enthusiasm, make sacrifices. But to do this job, you need to be rational. When I’m at the office, I don’t think about passion, I think about what is best for my company.”

“But being an Italian, I am also proud to represent Alfa Romeo in F1, especially this year in my new role. And I’m proud of what we’ve achieved together.”



The naming deal, which kicked off in 2018, was a win-win for Sauber and the Italian brand. Alfa Romeo got something that looked like a works Formula 1 team during the years of the championship's rapid growth, at a title sponsorship price. Sauber, which in mid-2016 was taken over by Tetrapak heir Finn Rausing's Longbow Finance, got its chance to grow again after several seasons verging on bankruptcy.

"For me it was the most clever partnership in F1 in the past 10 years," says Alunni Bravi. "For the first time, we gave to a title sponsor the possibility to brand the chassis name – and therefore, for a car manufacturer, to be perceived as a constructor, although it was only a commercial partnership at first. For the team, it gave us the possibility to do proper recruitment, because we could present the project with a long-term vision. It gave us credibility in discussions with sponsors, it made us attractive, thanks to the association with such a brand."

When Vasseur and Alunni Bravi joined the team, Sauber's cars carried huge logos on the engine covers marking 25 years in Formula 1. These were in lieu of actual sponsors.

"When we arrived at Sauber, I can tell you the exact amount of sponsorship money we had,

**"This role of a 'frontman' feels a bit strange – as a lawyer, I always worked behind the scenes. But it also means more responsibility"**

because I remember it very well," Alessandro says. "Zero. There was not a single sponsor, only technical suppliers. Last year we finished with 52 partners. And Alfa Romeo has been instrumental for us in becoming a credible player in F1.

"I was there with Fréd from the beginning, working with him, as a general counsel of course, but also on a daily basis being involved in the processes at the factory, during race weekends. Fréd was really a mentor, giving me confidence and freedom to negotiate with partners, sponsors, to draft contracts.

"With the inertia in F1, the process of rebuilding the team takes years. Sauber inherited the facilities from the BMW era, but that picture remained unchanged for more than 12 years, with no investment, no updates, and no maintenance, really. We went from 280 people in 2017 to 530 at the end of last year, and it is sort of a full transformation process, which was started by Fred, and we're still at the halfway point."

## INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

Purists might grizzle at the thought of classic brands launching SUV models but it's these

which the market increasingly demands. As we return our gorgeous (and thankfully undamaged) GT 1300 Junior into the loving hands of the local *Alfisti* we decant into a Stelvio – very much a pointer to Alfa's future, though its somewhat generic envelope is by no means as trendsetting as the Giugiaro-penned beauty we've just enjoyed. And Alfa Romeo's future no longer includes Formula 1.

The Sauber deal was simply too good to last too long. Back on its feet, the team then became a prime target for potential investors – and, a year and a half ago, when Vasseur promoted Alunni Bravi to the role of managing director, discussions with Audi became one of the key projects.

A future takeover was announced in mid-2022. Half a year later Alessandro got another job title, taking on some of the tasks previously discharged by Vasseur, who left for Ferrari. Alunni Bravi's role as 'team representative' allows the company's new CEO Andreas Seidl to focus on the bigger picture, which is preparing Sauber for its future as Audi's works team.

"From a personal point of view it was really hard for me to see him leave, because Fréd was always a mentor," says Alunni Bravi. "But, as we say in Italy, at a certain point you need to be able to walk with your own legs."

"Then, together with Mr Rausing, we discussed who could be the right person to replace Fréd, in view of the transformation into an Audi works team in 2026. And we thought Andreas the best option because he knows the Volkswagen Audi Group, having worked at Porsche for many years."

"And then, already with Andreas, we talked about my position. I'm a member of the board of directors of the Sauber Group and I have a strong relationship with the owner. But I never asked for anything. And it was Andreas who offered me the opportunity to be a team representative at the track, in addition to my role as managing director – so we created that new position."

"It's something new for me. I've been a team principal in GP2 and a team manager in Formula 3000, but not in F1. I didn't care if I'd be seen as a team principal. I want to give my contribution. We have Xevi Pujolar, our head of track engineering operations, and we have Beat Zehnder as a sporting director. We split our tasks, having a clear perimeter, freeing our leader, Andreas Seidl, to bring us forward."

"I have to say, this role of a 'frontman' feels a bit strange – as a lawyer, I always worked behind the scenes. But it also means more responsibility. And having responsibilities is something I enjoy."

## SAFETY FAST

Bernd Mayländer, the FIA Formula 1 Safety Car driver for nearly a quarter of a century, talks us through the tools in his mobile office

WORDS OLEG KARPOV  
PICTURES ZAK MAUGER

### 1

"What you see here is the cockpit of the Formula 1 Aston Martin Vantage Safety Car. It's largely a standard road car but with some important modifications. As you can see, my office chair – as well as that of my co-driver Richard Darker – is fitted with racing seatbelts. Apart from that, the interior isn't too different from the road version. The steering wheel is standard, but with some modified button functions. Most of the other elements I don't need but – funny as it may sound – the air conditioning is still one of the most important tools in the Safety Car! We're in it for most of Sunday afternoon and, if all goes well, we're usually in our stationary position at the end of the pitlane. And when you're in somewhere like Qatar where it's 40 degrees outside, you feel like you're in the oven."

### 2

"Here you see two buttons, green and red, and a light indicator. This is the main ignition for all the FIA systems in the car. When you start the engine, you have to press the green button to turn the systems on – and the light will show that it's working. The red button is for switching everything off."

### 3

"This is probably the most important element – the panel in the middle, because from there we can control the lighting system on top of the car. It's also where we have our radio control buttons.



"All four red buttons have pretty much the same function – they're for the main and backup radio channels. The ones on the left are for me and the ones on the right are for my co-driver. If someone wants to talk to us, the buttons light up and we have to press to talk. I also have two buttons on the steering wheel for the radio, but I prefer to use the ones on the central panel. Usually it will be the race director or his deputy on the other side of the line. We try to keep communication to a minimum

and concentrate on the most relevant things. "When Race Control wants to talk to us, it usually means we need to be ready to go out. We get a 'Safety Car standby' message and, in that case, Richard puts his finger on the white button that turns on the flashlights. That means 'Attention, the Safety Car is on standby!' – and it's a signal to whoever's standing next to us, whether it's marshals, mechanics or photographers. Of course we're always ready, but this is just the next step



before we go out. Sometimes we also get the 'Safety Car stand down' communication – for example, if the VSC is enough to clear the track or the driver has managed to get going again. In other cases, the next call from Race Control will be to deploy the Safety Car.

"As soon as we get it, Richard presses the orange button and the orange lights switch on. From that moment on, the Safety Car panels around the track are on, the marshals are showing

'SC' boards and waving yellow flags. And we deploy as quickly as possible.

"The green button is to let the drivers behind us pass. If it's not the race leader behind us, we give him a green light so he knows he can pass the Safety Car. And the blue button is the siren. There's nothing about it in the Sporting Regulations, but I usually press that button when I enter the pitlane just to get everyone's attention.

"The rest I don't really need, including the

standard functions. I have ESP off most of the time, since these cars are quite easy to drive. On normal roads it certainly helps but, as a former racing driver, I need to know how to handle the car. I don't touch other buttons, like the navigation, because I usually know where to go."

## 4

"There are two tablets in front of the co-driver's seat to give us more information about what's going on. On the left we usually have the normal F1 world feed and on the right the GPS map with all the cars. And if there's a big impact, we also see the g-force data.

"It's important to know what's happening in the race. Even if the race director tells us there's been an accident, we can also see the live TV picture and understand what's going on: where the cars are, if there's debris on the track and so on – because normally in those tense moments the Race Control people are busy, so there's no time to talk about everything. Thanks to GPS, we can also see where the leading car is.

"That's why there are two of us in the car. You get so much information and there's no room for mistakes in this job, so it's very important to have an extra pair of eyes in the cockpit."

## 5

"Richard also has his rear-view mirror, which isn't really a mirror but an extra screen which shows the image from the camera at the back. This is to have an extra channel of information, because I mainly concentrate on what's going on in front of me, but still all the other mirrors are adjusted for me.

"Next to it, you see a little box with three LED lights. It's a marshalling system, and the lights duplicate the colours of the flags: yellow, blue and red. The drivers have the same thing in their cars. You might wonder why we need them because we're never shown blue flags, for example. But that's mainly for testing purposes. Every morning before the sessions, when everyone's still in their hotels, we test all the systems before the sessions start – including this one."

## 6

"Finally, the camera. It's not the only one we have. There's also one behind us. When you see us on TV, the picture comes from one of them. And it's a very important feature for my Instagram followers."

FF

YOU RUIN  
MY DAY  
WHEN YOU  
MAKE ME  
TRAIN”



Unfiltered? Yes. Prone to emotional outbursts? Absolutely. Lazy training-dodger? Well, not so much. If you think you know everything about **Yuki Tsunoda**, prepare to be surprised...

WORDS OLEG KARPOV PICTURES PETER FOX, RED BULL CONTENT POOL AND YUKI TSUNODA/INSTAGRAM



**A** group of people armed with guns, standing shoulder to shoulder, are finding themselves being charged at by zombies.

"I don't want to do this!" screams one of them. "I don't want to do this!"

The footage, from inside one of London's virtual reality game rooms, is enshrined on the phone of performance coach Michael Italiano. And the screaming voice belongs to a Formula 1 driver he works with, Yuki Tsunoda.

"Yuki hasn't spent much time in London," the Australian, formerly the trainer of his childhood friend Daniel Ricciardo, tells *GP Racing*. "And I've been living in London for six years so, when he got there, he was like, 'Show me something I haven't done yet'.

"And I knew he loves shooters! So I picked the scariest zombie game. But before we put our equipment on, I could see he looked really nervous. I'm like, 'Are you okay, mate?' And he goes, 'I don't like zombies!' And I was like, 'Look, you'll be fine'. And he goes, 'No, no, no, can we change this?' And I'm like, 'No, it's too late, right? We are in here, we're doing it'.

"So, right at the start, when the first zombie comes at us, he's screaming! He's like, 'I just want to back out'. But then he loved it – he didn't want to take the goggles off! And at the end, you get the stats – and he actually won, he got the most kills. So he had the bragging rights. But at the start, he was being a little wuss, it was quite funny."

## The coach as driver-whisperer

"Of course I won. I cannot lose to him!" Tsunoda laughs, corroborating Italiano's description of events. "Yeah, I don't like the zombies and all this kind of scary stuff. I can't even watch horror movies alone. So, OK, I was a bit scared at first, but then got used to it, and actually enjoyed it a lot. You sort of feel like being in a movie or something, shooting zombies, which is cool. And in the end I won. So I'm happy."

This was all part of the getting-to-know-you process at the start of the year, when Italiano took over from Yuki's former trainer Noel Carroll, who had decided to step off the F1 ➤

# THANKS TO A CERTAIN ‘DOCUMENTARY’ SERIES AND THE AMPLIFICATION FACTOR OF SOCIAL MEDIA, THE POPULAR IMAGE OF YUKI CAN BE SUMMED UP THUS: HE’S SHOUTY ON THE RADIO, LOVES A HEARTY MEAL... AND HATES WORKING OUT

merry-go-round. Italiano had become available just at the right time, thanks to Ricciardo (now, by coincidence, Tsunoda’s neighbour in the AlphaTauri garage until his recent injury) becoming Red Bull’s reserve driver and no longer requiring a full-time performance coach.

Having moved to Europe from Japan just five years ago, which meant adapting to a very foreign culture and environment as well as new tracks and a different racing landscape, Tsunoda points out it was important for him to have “not only a working relationship” with his trainer.

“You’ve got to spend together more time than with our parents, and probably more than with anyone else,” he explains. “So, I don’t want it to be like... just business. It’s good to have both, a coach and a friend at the same time. You know, spending time with someone most of the year, I don’t want to waste my energy. I actually want to reduce stress, to have fun.

“I was worried about it at first. During the winter we had two weeks of training camp in Dubai – having never actually spoken properly with each other before it. But from the first day, we got along straight away.”

Italiano agrees: “On Yuki’s point, I mean, because you spend so much time together, you do need to get along. Simple as that.

“I’ve only worked with one driver before – and we were already friends. So, with Yuki, I was a little bit curious. Not nervous, just curious as to how it was going to go. And the way we started was probably... it literally just threw me in the deep end, because we met for about 30 minutes for a coffee in Abu Dhabi, the last race of 2022. You can’t really gauge much in half an hour of a coffee meeting. That was just to make sure Yuki was happy with the transition. The next time we actually met was in Dubai for training camp.

“Thankfully he liked my stupid humour. So, yeah, I understand when Yuki says you need to be friends. I would say the same on my side: for me, to enjoy my role as a coach, it’s better if you are. So, that same day when we did VR, he met my sister and her boyfriend. He met my family and my girlfriend, so that was nice. And we all had dinner together.”

## How to fight the ‘Netflix effect’

Yuki Tsunoda is a unique customer, though, especially when it comes to training. F1 is good at making labels stick – and at least three have attached themselves to AlphaTauri’s Japanese driver over his two and a half years on the grid.

Thanks to a certain ‘documentary’ series and the amplification factor of social media, the popular image of Yuki can be summed up thus: he’s shouty on the radio, loves a hearty meal... and hates working out.

“Alright,” smiles Italiano when asked about the accuracy of those labels. “I mean, you could probably add a fourth. He loves singing. You can’t shut him up in the car. I’m learning Japanese pop by listening to him while we drive. It’s painful...

“About the other ones... Well, shouting on the radio, we’re getting better. He loves his food, yes. And the third one? No, I’d say he’s changed. I wouldn’t say he hates training. I think he understands the importance of it now.”

Really? The guy who said “When I have workouts, especially in the morning, you ruin my whole day” on *Drive to Survive*, steam practically pouring from his ears at the thought of physical exertion?

“I’ll be honest, I didn’t watch the Netflix show,” says Italiano. “And it’s probably a good thing I didn’t watch it! Because it kind of gave me a bit of an open mind.

“I liaised with his previous coach, Noel, a lot, probably from Abu Dhabi onwards. He would send me the training he’d be doing with Yuki, and what Yuki would be eating. And he even sent ➤



me his testing results, so I could see where Yuki's baseline was. So I didn't come in blind. I knew a lot about him. I knew where his weaknesses were. So that kind of gave me an idea of how I could programme for Dubai. But I think I kind of just went in there and just stepped back a little bit, just to see how he trains, what motivated him, how he responded to certain cues that I gave – like, does he respond to my energy, does he not?

"But no, I wouldn't say he hates training. He trains hard. And since I've been on board, it's been, what, six or seven months... I've been training him very, very hard. And he's never complained. He's never asked why we need to do this and that. He's never asked for a day off when I've not prescribed it. He's never said, 'Oh, can I do this tomorrow?' He just does it."

Myth busted, then?

"No, I still don't like it," says Yuki, making his PR assistant chuckle. But he's not quite joking.

**Tsunoda still doesn't like the gym but has changed his mindset and is willing to do everything his trainer asks him to**

"I still don't like the equipment, I don't like the smell in the gym. But it's just a different mindset. I know how important it is. And I know that if I don't do it, if I don't train, if I don't put a lot of effort into training, I'm going to struggle in the race. So I'm doing it for the performance at the track. Yeah, first year [I didn't train as hard]. But obviously, as soon as I started to recognise how weak I actually am, more towards the second half of the season, that's when I spoke with Noel and said, 'We need to fix this', and from there we kind of changed my approach, that mindset.

"As soon as we started to improve our training programme everything became easier and that's why the second year I was able to improve. Which also kind of reconfirmed to me how important training is. So, it's not because of Michael I train more. We started already with Noel. Without him, I wouldn't have achieved what I did in the past two years. But now I'd say the amount of training Michael is giving me is probably more.

"I think we've chosen the right direction because so far this year I've never felt tired during a race, which was the case before, especially

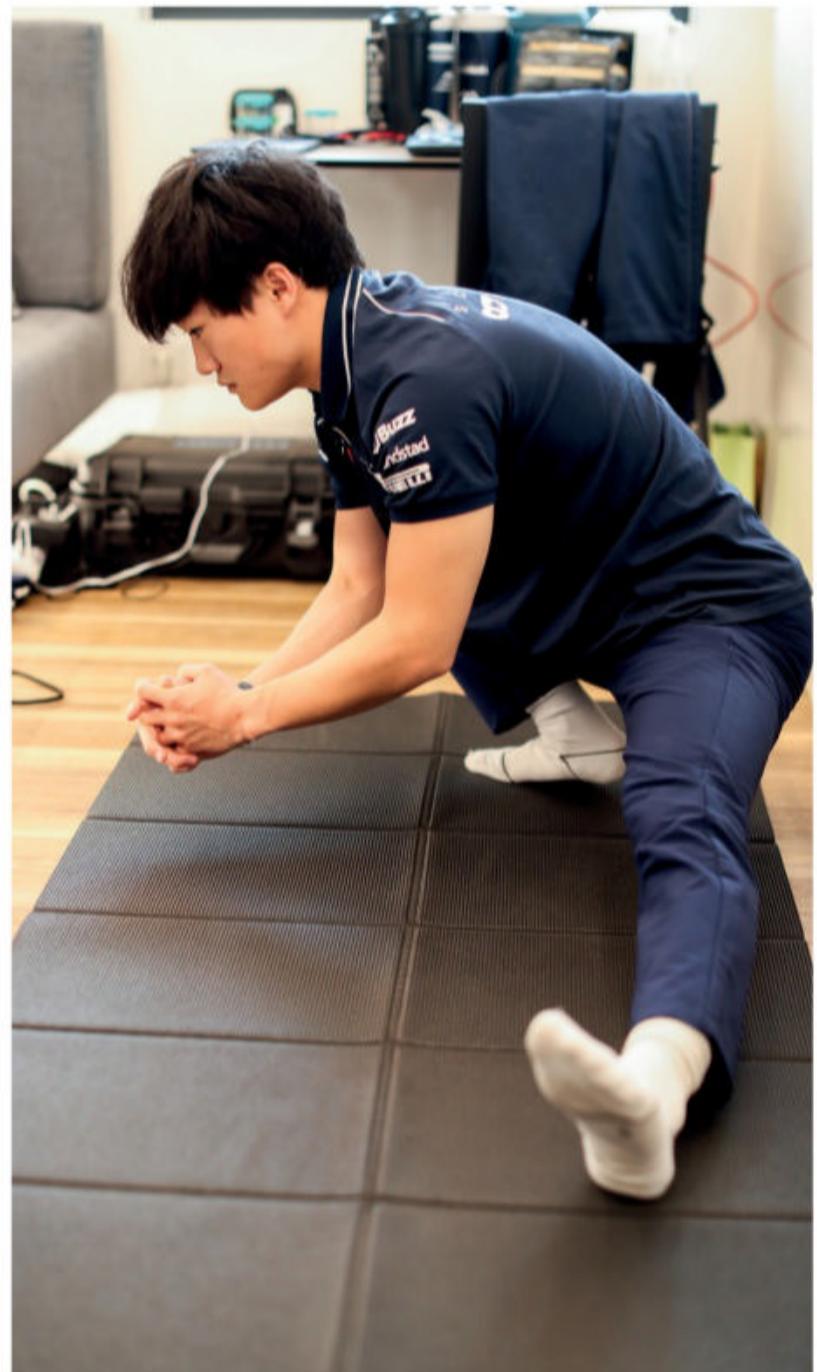
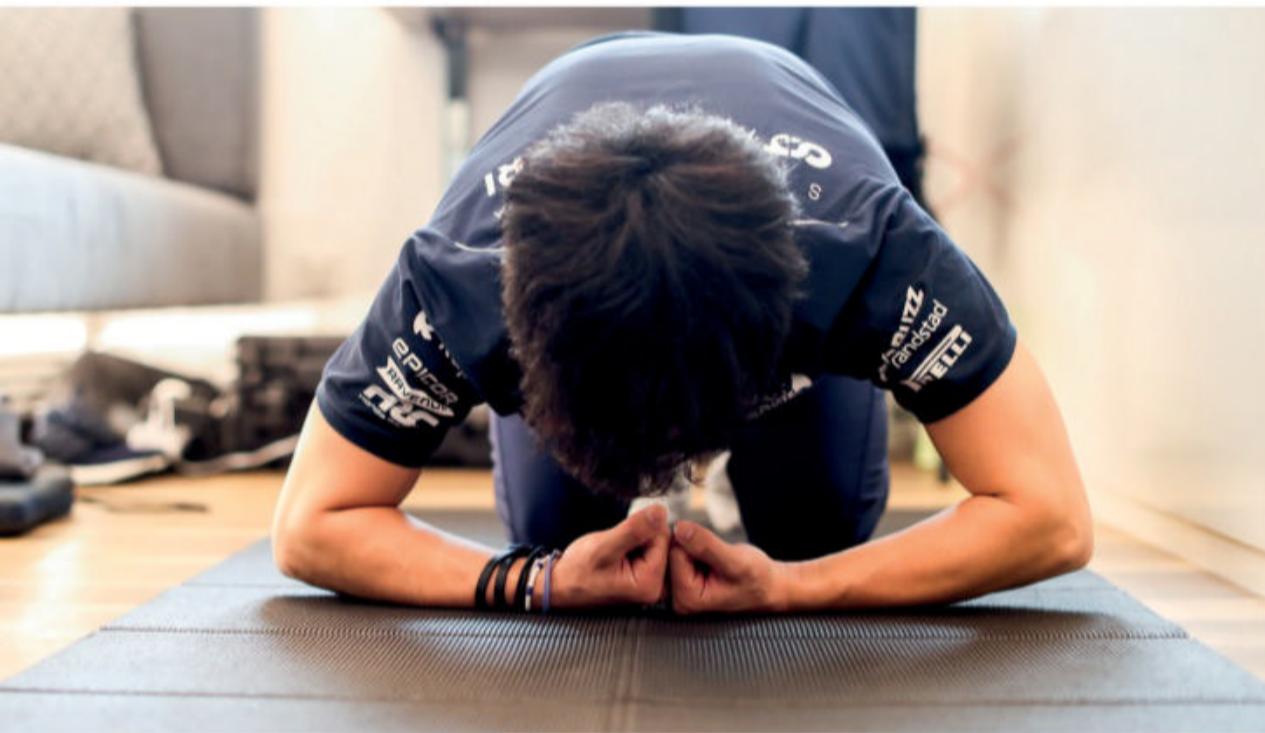
the first year. It was one of my limitations, we spoke with Noel about it, we tried to improve our training programme and last year I became better and better in terms of physical fitness. I wasn't struggling that much in the races. But now, third year, we also took a different approach, for example, with the training camp to begin the season. I feel how much progress I've made."

## Training the brain

It's clear even to an untrained eye that Yuki has changed. He looks much more the athlete than he did before.

"I'm definitely in good shape now, I would say the best shape ever in my motorsport career... And it's not just training," smiles Yuki, flourishing his drink bottle. "He's pushing me to drink this green shit. It doesn't taste nice, but apparently it's good for my brain. At least he [Italiano] says so. I thought my brain was alright. But he wants to make it better, so I drink it."

It hasn't been easy to judge Tsunoda this year, not only because AlphaTauri's competitiveness has dropped significantly, but also because the ➤





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**Tsunoda is in the best shape he has ever been this season and this will be crucial in races such as Singapore (above)**

main benchmark by which Yuki's performance was always measured, Pierre Gasly, is no longer with the team. Still, he outperformed highly rated rookie Nyck de Vries to such an extent that Red Bull bosses decided to sack de Vries. And even though Yuki himself admitted he was getting a little bit nervous when Italiano's previous client joined him at AlphaTauri, it was Tsunoda who brought the team another point at Spa.

"It's very different," says Michael of his experiences working with Ricciardo and Tsunoda. "Daniel was like a senior driver. He was quite established. He'd already built pretty strong professional qualities over the years. So it was just more about maintaining that and finding little ways to improve, whereas Yuki is a younger guy, trying to make his mark."

"And, you know, it's the third year, you could probably arguably say that your third and fourth year in Formula 1 is your make-or-break period. If you're not showing signs of improvement or some really good positive signs, the next younger person is probably going to come in, right?"

Tsunoda isn't yet a complete driver and he's the first to admit he still has a lot to learn. Brutally honest with the media, he's gone as far as to say his feedback wasn't as good as de Vries' even after Nyck was sacked, and that Ricciardo's ability to communicate with the team is "at a different level". He knows he needs to improve in many areas, including temper.

"I think the radio [composure] is a sign of maturity," notes Italiano. "As you get older you mature quite naturally. And I think the whole

yelling situation, the last couple of years, is probably Yuki not controlling his emotions well enough. He understands that. It's getting better – he had a penalty in Barcelona [for pushing Zhou Guanyu off the track], and he didn't agree with it. But he didn't yell on the radio, he responded quite calmly and respectfully to his engineer.

"It's something he definitely wants to get better at, because he's aware when he's calm in the car he drives very well and when he lets his emotions take over he makes mistakes. So it's a bit of a non-negotiable to try and help him control his emotions a bit more. But I think that's natural, right? He's 22. I remember when I was 22 I had no control over my emotions. Unfortunately, being in Formula 1, you don't have time. You're in the spotlight, you need to adapt quicker. He's putting in the hard work and I think, by the end of the year, the yelling will be gone."

Tsunoda's natural speed, which accounted for his rapid ascent of the European junior racing ladder, is still his greatest asset. Without it he wouldn't have lasted three years in F1. And while he's still hardly immune to mistakes, when F1 left Europe for its end-of-season world tour Yuki remained the only driver to have scored points for AlphaTauri this year.

It took him a while to realise that he couldn't rely on talent alone to succeed in F1. But perhaps more importantly, just as he now understands how important his physical form is, he also knows that it's better to keep a cool head and shoot zombies right away as they come, rather than waste time shouting at them. 

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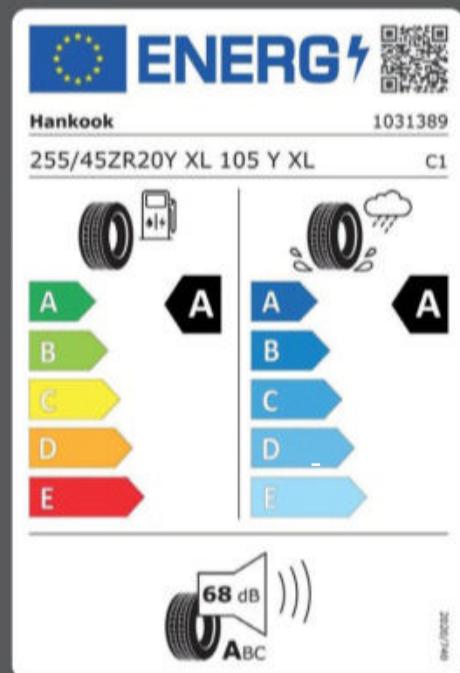
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<sup>1</sup> TÜV SÜD Tire Test 2022, Report No. 713252186-BM01, -PM01. Test period March 2022. Test performed on the Hankook Ventus iON S with four competitor tyres, in the size 245/45 ZR19 102Y XL. Test vehicles: Tesla Model S 85, Tesla Model S P100D, Audi Q5 Sportback 40 TDI, VW Tiguan 2.0 TDI. Test location: IDIADA, Papenburg, Neubiberg, Garching. Applies to all further mentions of the TÜV SÜD Tire Test.

# BENETTON



# B190

A pivotal point in the team's journey from the midfield to title-winning greatness

## NOW THAT WAS A CAR

No. 121

WORDS  
STUART COOLING  
PICTURES  
JAMES MANN



**M**claren's almost absolute dominance of the 1988 Formula 1 season had many consequences, some almost unseen. In Italy it fertilised seeds of doubt over Ferrari's decision to poach John Barnard from McLaren and indulge his requirements of setting up a design facility near Godalming so he could drive home for lunch. After all, *il Mago* ('the magician') had yet to deliver a win for Maranello, besides the inherited one at Monza, while McLaren seemed to be getting along perfectly well without him.

Elsewhere in that country the wealthy Benetton dynasty were also musing over the wisdom of their Formula 1 investments. The family-owned knitwear company had entered F1 as a sponsor before acquiring the struggling Toleman team at the end of 1985. Progress seemed rapid at first – from the low bar of having to acquire the assets of the defunct Spirit team just to put tyres on the cars at the beginning of that season. Toleman had high-calibre engineers, including Rory Byrne and Pat Symonds, and wanted only for resource; the '85 car was its first



carbon monocoque to be built in-house.

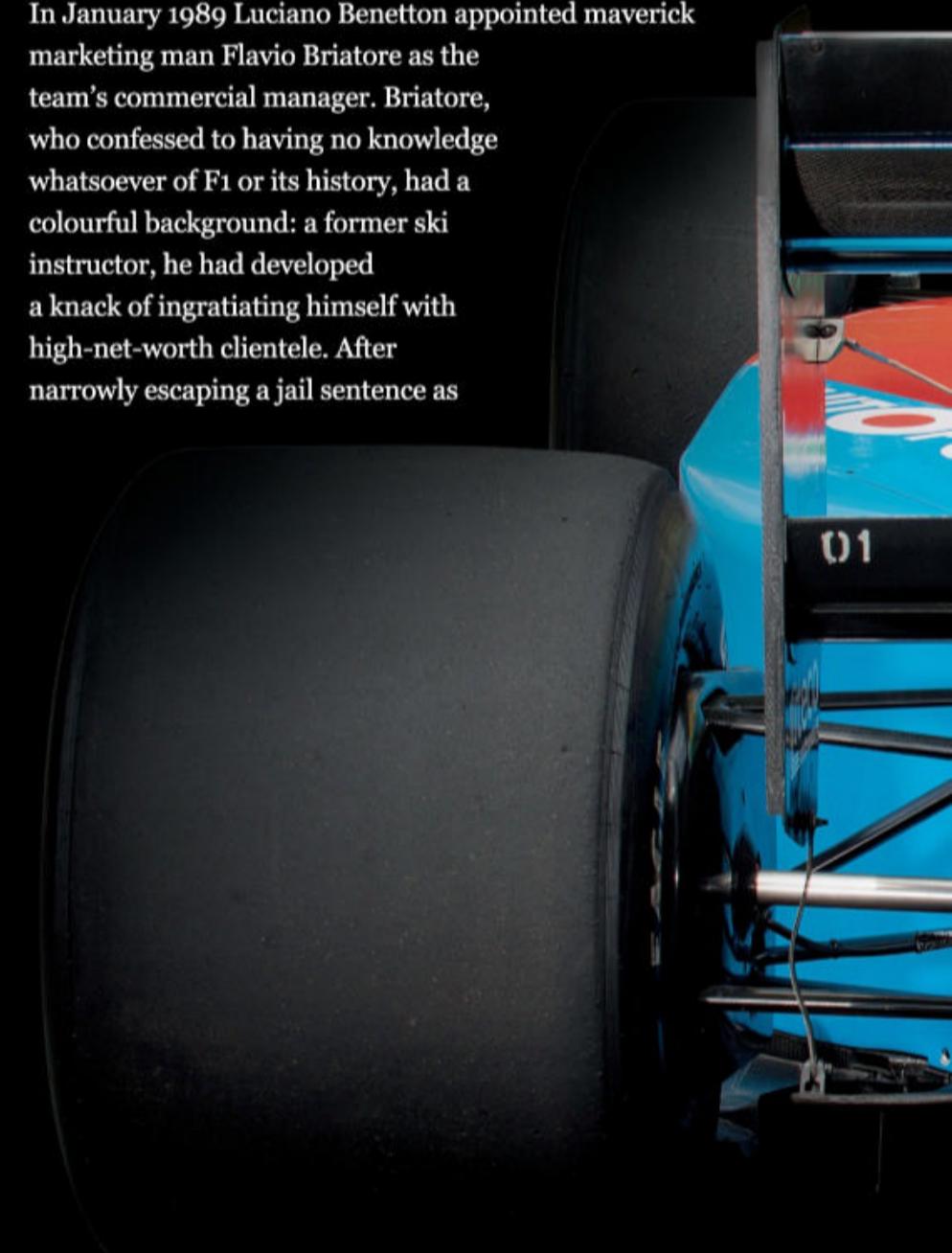
With a new name above the door – Benetton Formula – and powerful but lag-prone BMWs replacing the Hart turbos, the team claimed its first victory in 1986 as Gerhard Berger beat Alain Prost by 25s in Mexico (helped by the Pirelli tyres' greater durability than Goodyear's there). But the returns were slimmer in subsequent seasons as Byrne found himself having to design around a different engine every year. BMW slimmed down to a one-team supply – Brabham – and then withdrew, leaving Benetton to take on Ford's late and unsuccessful GBA turbo in 1987 and then the naturally aspirated DFR in '88. Despite the disadvantage of running the elderly V8, Alessandro Nannini and Thierry Boutsen notched up seven podiums and

## BENETTON B190

**NOW THAT WAS A CAR**  
No121

elevated Benetton to third in the constructors' championship.

Change was brewing, though, as the Benetton family grew impatient with progress under the leadership of former journalist and Williams team manager Peter Collins. In January 1989 Luciano Benetton appointed maverick marketing man Flavio Briatore as the team's commercial manager. Briatore, who confessed to having no knowledge whatsoever of F1 or its history, had a colourful background: a former ski instructor, he had developed a knack of ingratiating himself with high-net-worth clientele. After narrowly escaping a jail sentence as



part of his association with businessman Attilio Dutto and his bankrupt Paramatti Vernici company, Briatore developed an association with Luciano Benetton and led the company's successful franchise expansion in the USA, latterly overseeing Benetton's controversial global marketing campaigns featuring copulating horses and other striking (if outré) imagery.

The 1989 season got off to stuttering start – the B188 car had to be pressed into service in the opening rounds when the B189 was delayed, and new recruit Johnny Herbert was struggling with the legacy of his leg-shattering F3000 accident the previous August. Collins viewed Herbert as a future world champion and he certainly had the talent; what he lacked was the leg strength for heavy braking. Luciano Benetton was never quite sold on him and, when Herbert failed to qualify in Canada and Ford bigwigs began to chafe in public, Herbert was dropped in favour of McLaren test driver Emanuele Pirro. This didn't recoup enough political capital to save Collins, who was ousted by Briatore at the end of August.

Once his feet were under the desk, Briatore had free rein to shake up the team as he pleased. At Monza he approached

## ONCE HIS FEET WERE UNDER THE DESK, BRIATORE HAD FREE REIN TO SHAKE UP THE TEAM AS HE PLEASED

Barnard, whose Ferrari contract was due to expire at the end of October with no renewal in the offing. Over breakfast on race day morning, with Alessandro Benetton in attendance, Briatore outlined his ambitions to break the team out of 'best of the rest' status, backed by greater buy-in from Ford, increased sponsorship and a glossier image. Barnard's response was to say he would require new, state-of-the-art facilities – in the vicinity of Godalming, natch – and shared ownership of it and the race team. Deal done, he joined as technical director and general manager on 6 November.

Thus the B190 currently taking shape in Rory Byrne's mind would be the last of a generation of cars which had begun when ➤



Toleman graduated from F2 to F1 in 1981. While Benetton planned further investment in its existing Witney factory, and would continue to base race operations from there, Barnard was adamant that the entire design and construction facility would transfer to the new base in Surrey – which would require staff to relocate or face a multi-hour commute. Unsurprisingly there was little appetite for this and fault lines quickly developed within the organisation.

Barnard also had little or no interest in the B190, a car he declaimed as “exceedingly ugly”. Apart from making some suggestions about the suspension geometry he largely left Byrne to his own devices, since his bandwidth was occupied by future developments – his own car design, to be powered by a

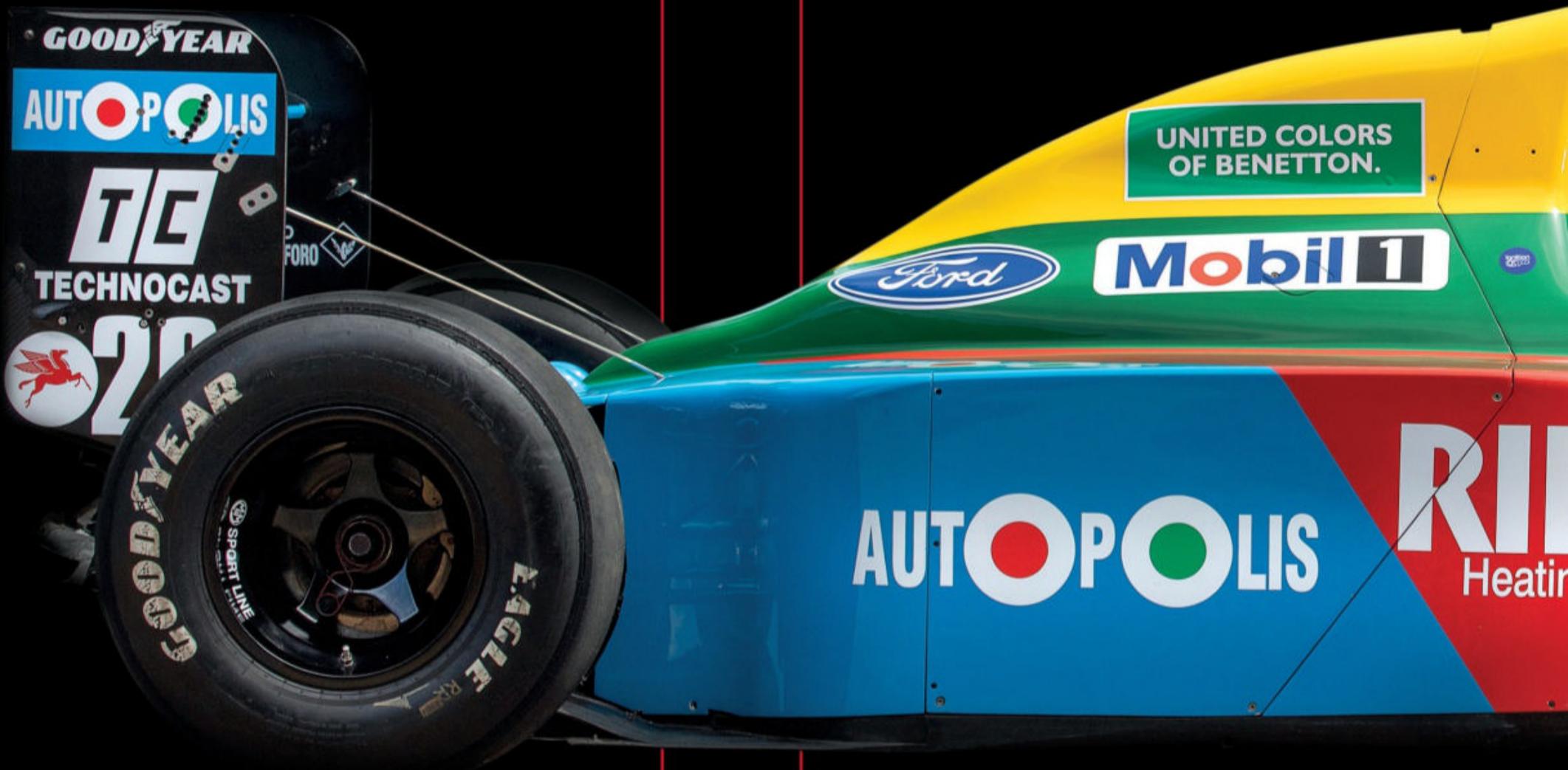
new V12 engine provided he could persuade Ford to underwrite it. One notable shortcoming of the Benetton setup was the lack of an in-house windtunnel; it used Cranfield University’s tunnel at Shrivenham, which had a rolling road but could only accommodate quarter-scale models and had no means of rapidly adjusting pitch angles and ride height. The first job for future Benetton, Ferrari and Mercedes technical director James Allison, then a recent graduate recruited by Barnard, was to design a strut which could achieve these adjustments while the tunnel was still running.

Although the B190 was the last of a genre it differed from its predecessors in a number of key details. Byrne took the opportunity to break from the turbo-style sidepod



**BARNARD ALSO HAD LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN THE B190, A CAR HE DECLAIMED AS “EXCEEDINGLY UGLY”**





configuration; where the B188 and B189 had low-profile engine covers with air scoops above the radiator inlets. the B190 had a conventional airbox above the driver's head with a wider volume to accommodate the relatively tall 75-degree HB engine. The nose treatment was different, too: while the previous cars took an almost undeviating sloping line from the front of the cockpit aperture to the tip of the nose, the B190's conk remained almost horizontal to a point just above the front wishbone legs, where it dropped sharply to wing level. A necessary evil resulting from the swap from pullrod to pushrod actuation for the springs and dampers, which now had to be located at the top of the bulkhead, it was an ugly compromise.

Another contentious point for Barnard – not that he made a concerted effort to over-rule it – was the configuration of the front wing. For several years Byrne had been using a relatively deep surface in combination with track-skimming endplates to achieve a degree of ground effect: the endplates theoretically 'sealed' the airflow underneath. When it worked it was very effective but, as Barnard pointed out, it was highly sensitive to bumps and pitch changes – neither of which could be accurately simulated in the Shrivenham tunnel. Barnard concluded that his new colleagues simply didn't understand aerodynamics, an opinion he would later revise when Byrne-designed cars won several world championships.

Briatore continued to revel in his burgeoning reputation as a disruptor – he would become firm friends with F1 'ringmaster' Bernie Ecclestone – but he appeared to confirm the impression that he was a little out of his depth with the trophy signing of Nelson Piquet, widely regarded as a spent force, to join Nannini for the 1990 season. In fact, while Piquet *had* been on a spectacular salary for two unproductive seasons at Lotus,

## BENETTON B190

### NOW THAT WAS A CAR

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Briatore nailed him down to a relatively pitiful stipend, albeit with bonuses for points scored.

Nelson kept his bank account ticking over with points finishes in the opening two transatlantic flyaway rounds, in which Benetton fielded B-spec B189s powered by the latest-spec HB engine. The B190 made its competitive debut at round three, the beginning of the European season, in San Marino – where Nannini held off Alain Prost's Ferrari to score a podium finish behind Riccardo Patrese's Williams and Gerhard Berger's McLaren. Granted, Nannini benefited from the retirements of Ayrton Senna, Thierry Boutsen and Nigel Mansell, but getting the better of Prost was a significant coup.

Monaco was disappointing as Nannini stopped with gearbox failure and Piquet was disqualified for receiving a push start after spinning but, elsewhere, the B190 proved itself capable of challenging for podiums: Piquet was second in Canada ➤



and Nannini passed Senna for third place in France before an electrical glitch set in, but he was a fine second to Senna (and ahead of Berger) when a bold no-stop strategy paid off in Hockenheim. The Benettons generally occupied the lower reaches of the top 10 in qualifying but what the Ford engine lacked in horsepower compared with the Honda, Renault and Ferrari it partially compensated with reliability; the B190 chassis was nimble and kind enough on its tyres to consider non-stop races on tracks with a sympathetic surface.

But this was still not quite what Briatore or Barnard desired and, since diplomacy was not among the perfectionist Barnard's strong suits, his visits to Witney generally provoked rancour. It was not difficult for long-time Toleman/Benetton employees to divine his disdain for both the state of aerodynamic research and the understanding of composite design and construction. Having been nicknamed 'The Prince of Darkness' at McLaren he rapidly became known as 'The Godalming Scud', after the ballistic missiles being exchanged in the conflict in Kuwait. "Unlike Scuds," he was heard to say

## BENETTON B190

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upon being apprised of this, "I always explode when I land."

In October, shortly after Nannini claimed another podium in Spain, 13 employees including Byrne, Symonds and aerodynamicist Willem Toet tendered their resignations to Briatore and left to join Adrian Reynard's 'secret' F1 project. A week after the Spanish GP Nannini lost his right arm in a helicopter crash, ending a promising F1 career although surgery to reattach it was successful

enough for him to return to the cockpit in touring cars.

Formula 1 can be a cold and unsympathetic domain. As news of Nannini's accident percolated through the racing world, putative replacements began shamelessly cold-calling Barnard to declare themselves available to fill the vacancy. But the job went to someone who was already sitting in Godalming on that day: Roberto Moreno, desperate to engineer himself out of the hopeless Eurobrun outfit, was in the UK looking for other drives and had volunteered to help Barnard perfect the cockpit dimensions for the forthcoming B191. The two had worked together at Ferrari and Barnard rated him.

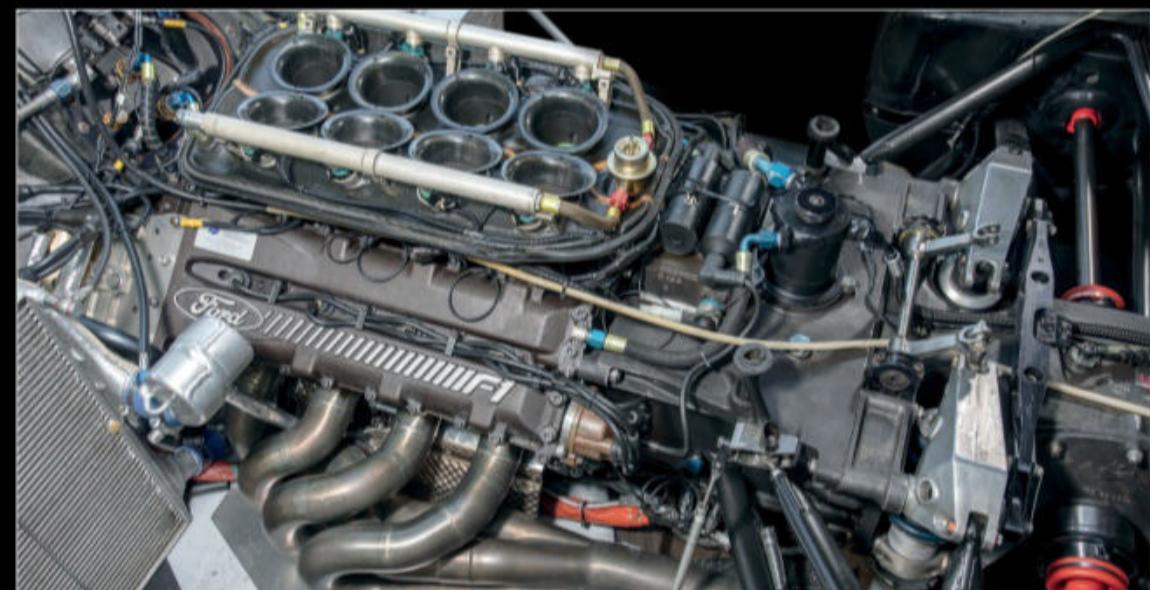
From sixth and ninth on the grid in Japan Piquet and Moreno finished 1-2 as Prost and Senna collided on the first lap, Gerhard Berger spun off on the gravel detritus left by them,





then Nigel Mansell broke a driveshaft on the way out of the pits. It was the Benetton team's best-ever combined result and, while this win was inherited to a great extent, at the season closer in Adelaide Piquet had to earn victory the hard way, fending off Mansell on old tyres after Senna missed a gear and crashed out.

Adapted to run Pirelli rubber and resplendent in the promised new sponsorship – Camel and Nippon Autopolis – the B190 contested the first two rounds of 1991 before Barnard's B191 was introduced at San Marino. What Pirelli brought to the table in this era was super-sticky qualifying tyres and slightly too hard – if durable – race rubber, so lead runners on Goodyears planning a pitstop had to accommodate the prospect of emerging behind Piquet and/or Moreno into their thinking, for the B190s – and, indeed, the B191s – would not be stopping. Piquet's B190 finished on the podium in the final race at the unloved Phoenix street circuit, though this was partly a factor of attrition as the rapid Williams-Renaults were sidelined by gearbox issues.



All was not well behind the scenes, however. Barnard's no-compromise approach brought him into conflict with Briatore and Cosworth, the V12 never happened, and Ford began to get cold feet as the global economy cooled in response to surging oil prices brought on by the Kuwait conflict. When money promised for the Godalming project was repeatedly delayed, the contracts were annulled and Barnard departed mid-season.

Benetton would not be without senior technical leadership for long. When Reynard failed to secure an engine and abandoned its planned F1 entry, Byrne, Symonds and Toet were free agents again – and welcomed back to Witney. Joining them as technical director came Ross Brawn, fresh from TWR's successful Jaguar sportscar programme.

Come September they would have a new superstar to shape their next car around: Michael Schumacher... 

#### RACE RECORD

**Starts** 32  
**Wins** 2  
**Poles** 0  
**Fastest laps** 1  
**Podiums** 7  
**Championship points** 73

#### SPECIFICATION

**Chassis** Carbonfibre monocoque  
**Suspension** Double wishbones with pushrod-actuated inboard coil springs/dampers  
**Engine** Naturally aspirated Ford HBA4 V8  
**Engine capacity** 3498cc  
**Power** 650bhp @ 13000 rpm  
**Gearbox** Six-speed manual  
**Brakes** Carbon discs front and rear  
**Tyres** Goodyear, Pirelli  
**Weight** 500kg  
**Notable drivers** Nelson Piquet, Alessandro Nannini, Roberto Moreno



## MARIO ISOLA

# 10 THINGS I LOVE



Pirelli's Formula 1 boss enjoys polishing his axe skills and making new friends on Instagram...



### Voluntary work

Probably a lot of people know it already, but when I'm back in Milan I spend some of my free time working as a volunteer, filling in as an ambulance driver and paramedic. I started when I was 18, so it's more than 35 years now – almost all of it in the same association.

I like doing night shifts, not only driving an ambulance but sometimes being in charge of the team as well. I love it. It's something that helps you to realise there is something different in the world apart from F1 or motorsport.



### Playing guitar

My dad used to play double bass. He and his friends had a small jazz group and, when I was six or seven, I used to go with him and play the guitar with them. Then I started to play with friends. It's just a hobby. I can't say I'm too good at it, but I do own an electric guitar. It's not too expensive, because it would be useless to have an expensive guitar with my skills, but it's still a decent guitar. I don't have any favourite style. I just like to play normal Italian songs which you can sing together in company because everybody knows the words.

### Organising

I like to be in charge. I like to organise and lead projects, create something new. It can be anything, from organising a training course for ambulance drivers or an event for media to optimising some processes at work. That's why, probably, I stress my colleagues so much.

### Social media

There's a lot of negativity about social media, but I find it really interesting. My favourite is Instagram, and I often find myself chatting with people. More often than not it's people I don't know. It's still a very good tool to learn what others think and hear different opinions. It's not just negative, you can find a lot of good people, and even make friends. It's also nice to entertain people, tell them more about F1, which some time ago was criticised for being too far from its fans.





## Going out with friends

We have a hectic schedule and obviously I don't spend too much time at home. So whenever I have a chance I try to go and have dinner with my friends – and that is one of my favourite things to do. Just going out and discovering some new places together with good friends.



## Tyres

To be honest, before I started work for Pirelli I didn't know much about tyres. I joined the company as a test driver because I used to race go-karts, but then I moved to the design department. For two or three years I was involved in a new team, developing new winter tyres, and at the time I couldn't just walk on the street without checking the tyres on parked cars – just to get new ideas and see different treads. Luckily then I moved to the motorsport division, so I don't do that anymore! But the technology – and just the understanding of why tyres are such an important part of car performance – fascinates me.



## Racing

I raced go-karts from age 13 to 22, so almost 10 years, and now I try to race whenever I have a free weekend and an opportunity. It could be circuit racing or rallying. A few years ago I did an autocross race with a buggy, which was a lot of fun! I don't have time to take part in any championship, but in the past I did a couple of 24-hour races. I also did Rally Mexico once, when it wasn't on the WRC calendar. It was called the International Rally of Nations, but the routes were the same as in the real Rally Mexico, so it was a fantastic experience.

## Padel

Strangely enough I'm not a football fan. I am from Milan, but somehow I never was into football. Maybe a little bit, for a brief period, when I was eight or nine years old – but even then I couldn't decide which team to support. One year I was for [AC] Milan, and the year after for Inter. In the end, it never became a passion. So, I don't follow it and don't play. The sport I like recently is padel. I started to play not long ago, but I really like it.



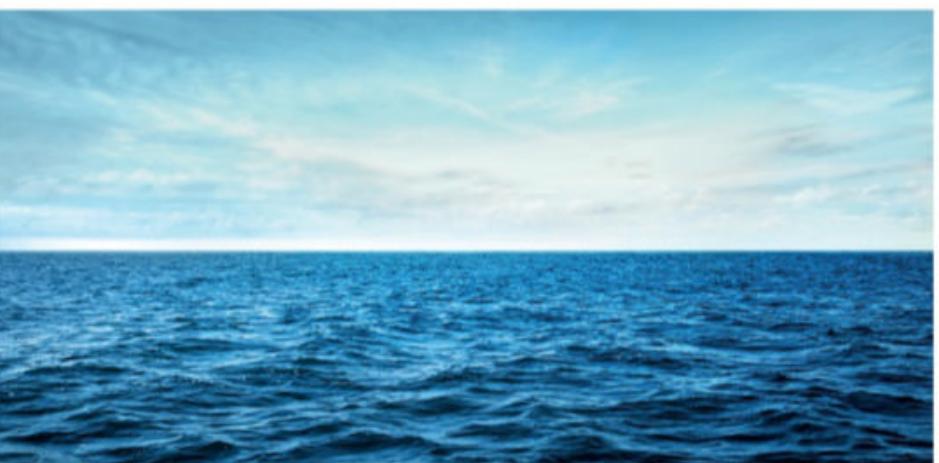
## Comedy movies

During a quiet evening I like watching comedy movies – some light stuff, just to have a laugh. It's difficult for me to watch a series. If you have 20 seasons with 50 episodes in each of them, it's difficult for me to follow so, whenever I have time to spend a couple of hours in front of the TV, I go for a comedy.



## The sea

It may sound strange but I love travelling – when it's for holidays. And when I travel, I like to go to the seaside. If it's Europe, I go to Italy, Greece, Spain. If it's a bit further away, I love going to the Caribbean Sea. I'm not spending all the time, from nine in the morning to seven, at the beach, but I like staying in front of the sea. It just feels relaxing.





 **motorsport**  
IMAGES

**SHOWCASE**

# JACKIE STEWART

It's 50 years since Jackie Stewart claimed his third and final world championship at Monza

▲ Stewart impressed in Formula 3 in 1964 with Ken Tyrrell but refused offers to make his F1 debut with Lotus that season. Instead he signed for BRM for 1965 and finished sixth in his first world championship race, the South African GP



Jackie was a regular visitor to the F1 paddock after he retired, as befits a triple world champion, before a full-time return as a team owner. After selling Stewart GP to Ford he stayed on as a consultant to Jaguar Racing, although quite why he was leading the pipe band at the 2004 US GP is a mystery



The 1965 Italian GP was only Stewart's eighth world championship race and with four podiums from the first seven it wasn't a shock when he triumphed at Monza. Stewart battled with Jim Clark and BRM team-mate Graham Hill until Clark retired and Hill had a late race-off at the Parabolica



Stewart started off racing in sportscars, following in brother Jimmy's footsteps by driving for Ecurie Ecosse. Pictured here at Oulton Park in 1963, with future F1 photographer Keith Sutton, Stewart won 14 times that year before moving up to single-seaters in 1964. He returned to sportscars a few times, including a one-off appearance at Le Mans in 1965, in a gas-turbine powered Rover-BRM he shared with Graham Hill



1967 wasn't a great year for Stewart. He'd won in both of his previous seasons in F1 but the best he could manage in 1967, in a number of different BRMs, was two podiums. Stewart retired from the other nine races, including Monaco where his P261 expired after 14 laps, forcing him to get a lift back to the pits at the end of the race with fellow Scot Jim Clark





From Stewart's 99 starts and 27 wins in world championship F1 events, it is widely agreed that his greatest race was the 1968 German GP at the Nürburgring. In simply horrendous conditions Jackie took the lead from Graham Hill at the end of lap one and went on to win by over four minutes



23 years after he last raced in Formula 1 Jackie, in conjunction with son Paul who had finished racing in 1993, set up Stewart Grand Prix. With a Ford works engine deal the team raced from 1997 to 1999. This was the only win, thanks to Johnny Herbert, in the 1999 European GP at the Nürburgring



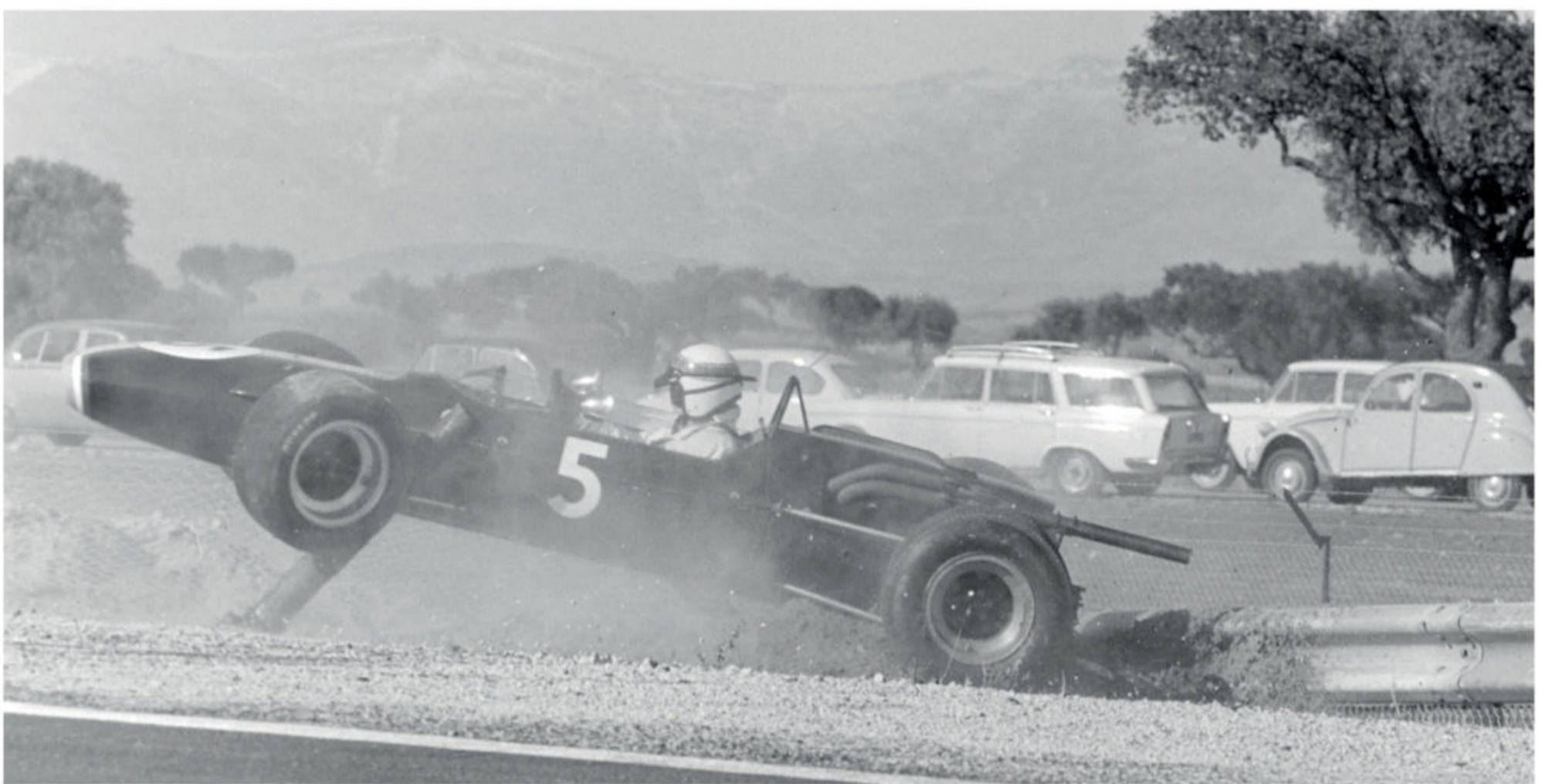
In 1968 Stewart continued to race in F2 and in April shunted in practice for the Jarama round, where he broke the scaphoid on his right wrist. He missed two F1 GPs, in Spain and Monaco, returning to action at Spa where he showed off the splint that allowed him to race to Jacky Ickx



◀ *Stewart's quest for improved safety in F1 after his 1966 Belgian GP crash meant he was always willing to test innovations himself. This space-age-looking enhanced fireproof suit was trialled in South Africa in 1968*



▶ *Although the Stewart and Tyrrell names are synonymous in F1 history, up until the tail end of 1970 all of Stewart's victories were either in BRMs, Matras or a March. That changed when he won the 1971 Spanish GP in Tyrrell's 003 chassis*



▲ *Non-championship races were also a big part of the F1 scene when Stewart was racing. In 1967 he took part in four, the last of which was the non-championship Spanish GP at Jarama. Stewart, driving a Tyrrell-entered Matra MS7 F2 car, was battling for fourth when he slid off track and into a barrier. Luckily he emerged unhurt...*

▶ *Stewart married his wife Helen in 1962, before his F1 career took off. It was fairly commonplace in those days for wives to accompany their husbands to a number of races and at Monza in 1969, where Jackie would win his first world title, Helen was joined by their two sons, Paul and Mark*



## SHOWCASE JACKIE STEWART

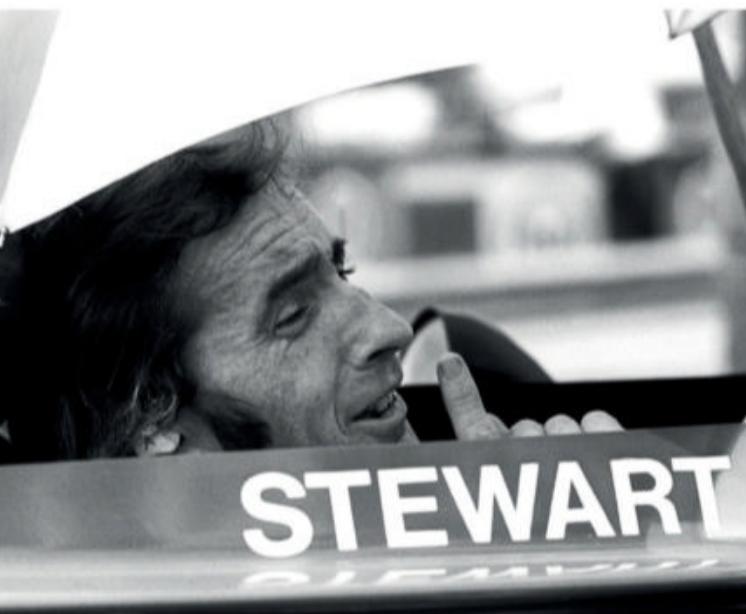
Stewart led at least one lap of every GP in 1969, and he remains the only driver to achieve that feat in a season. Driving the Matra MS80 from round two onwards Jackie dominated a number of races, none more so than the Spanish GP at Montjuïc Park where his nearest rival, Bruce McLaren, finished two laps adrift



Stewart relaxes with Tyrrell designer Derek Gardner and team-mate François Cevert ahead of practice for the 1973 US GP at Watkins Glen, just before Cevert's tragic death. Tyrrell and Stewart, who had decided to retire at the end of the season but hadn't announced it publicly, withdrew as a mark of respect for Cevert



In dry conditions Stewart qualified on the front row for the 1966 Belgian GP at the then 8.76-mile Spa circuit. On race day the fickle Ardennes weather played its part and on the first lap seven drivers, including Jackie, spun off in the rain. Stewart's accident happened at the Masta Kink and he was trapped in his car for 30 minutes. It was this incident that started the Scot on a quest to improve all aspects of safety in F1



Four years on from winning his first world championship at Monza in 1969, Stewart clinched his third and final title at the same circuit. In 1969 he won the Italian GP but this time he only finished fourth, behind the Lotus of winner Ronnie Peterson. However, with his nearest rivals Emerson Fittipaldi and fellow Tyrrell driver François Cevert only second and fifth respectively, the title was his with two races to go

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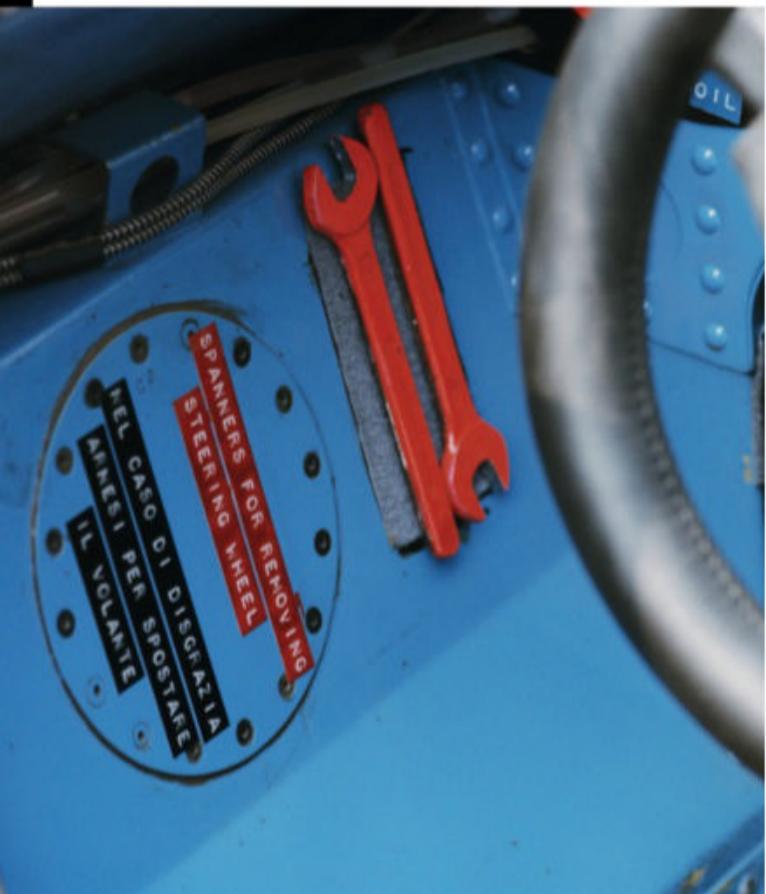
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 **LISTA**



▲ Monaco in 1972 was wet from start to finish and is a race Jackie would like to forget. Usually a master of such conditions, he started slowly before putting in a series of stunning laps, only to have a massive spin. He finished fourth with a spluttering engine, and then was diagnosed with gastritis, which forced him out of the next GP

▼ When Stewart was trapped in his car after a first-lap shunt in the 1966 Belgian GP, fellow drivers Graham Hill and Bob Bondurant were forced to borrow tools from spectators to help free him. This prompted a lifelong safety crusade for Stewart and this 'tool kit' in the cockpit of his Matra MS80 at Monza in 1969



▲ Halfway through 1973 Stewart was locked in a scrap with reigning world champion Emerson Fittipaldi. Stewart took advantage of a run of retirements for the Lotus driver and this win in Germany, his 27th and last in F1, would go a long way to clinching his third world title

▼ Stewart qualified second for the 1971 Austrian GP at the Österreichring and allowed polesitter Jo Siffert to lead at the start. However, having won five of the first seven GPs of the season, even a retirement after 35 laps couldn't prevent him from claiming a second world championship

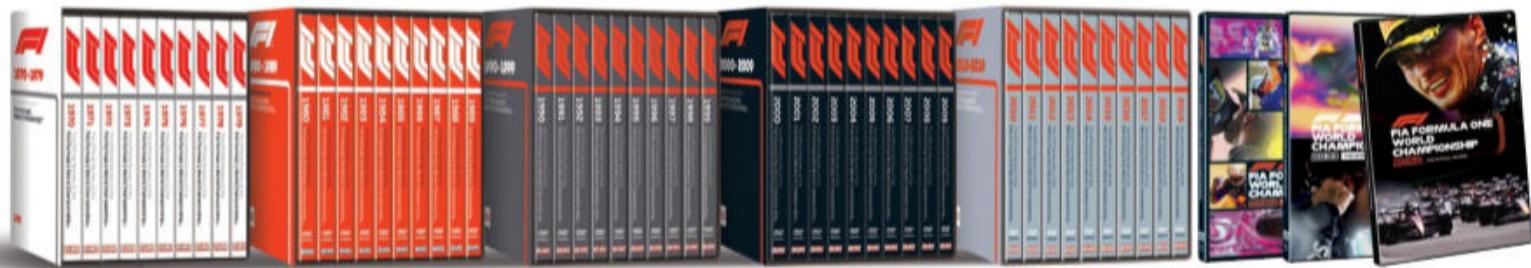




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# MAURICE HAMILTON'S ALTERNATIVE VIEW

Blanket TV coverage, plus a lot more scrutiny, means every on-track knock requires a call from the race director and, perhaps, the stewards. Once upon a time such incidents might have been sorted out in a different fashion...

PICTURES  motorsport IMAGES



Senna leads Mansell in the restarted 1987 Belgian GP before the pair tangled.

The subsequent 'discussion' in the Lotus garage afterwards was a little fruity...

**YOU WILL HAVE SEEN THE FUSS** over who did what to whom when Sergio Pérez and Lewis Hamilton collided during the Belgian Grand Prix. Officials intervened, hit Hamilton with a penalty – and immediately set social media on fire with outraged opinion.

What's wrong with racing these days? Why can't they simply let the drivers get on with it? Just like at the same circuit in 1987 when Ayrton Senna and Nigel Mansell disputed a piece of road – not far from the scene of this year's contretemps – and the argument was settled when Nigel grabbed Ayrton by the throat. Job done.

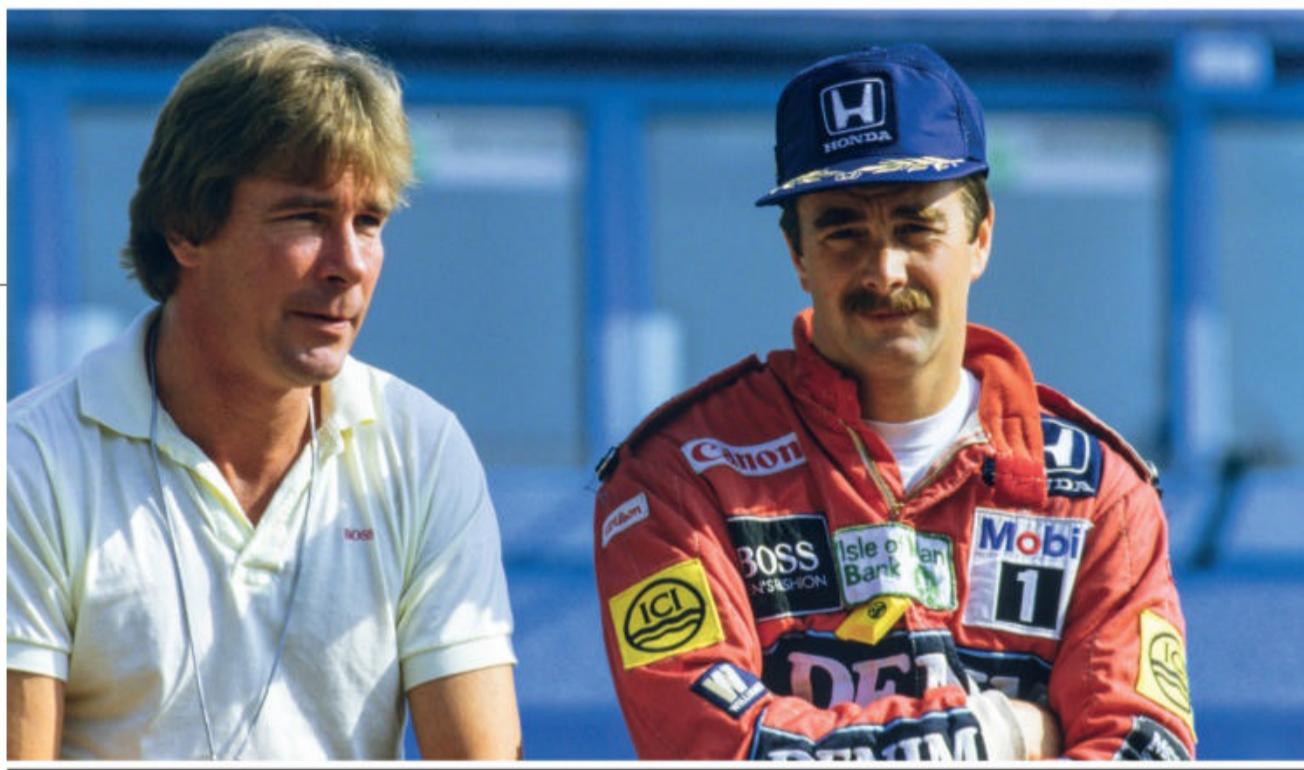
The officials didn't utter a peep. Probably didn't dare after they heard Senna's description of how he saw Mansell storm into the Lotus garage with a look that said he wasn't coming to suggest they

**MANSELL WOULD NOT BE CALLED TO ACCOUNT BECAUSE NO REPORTS OF THE ALLEGED ATTACK HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY THE STEWARDS**

have a cosy coffee and share a bag of pommes frites and mayonnaise. The Lotus mechanics intervened and brought some semblance of order as both drivers continued to loudly blame each other from what had become, to paraphrase contemporary terminology, an unsocial distance. And that was the end of the matter.

The stewards packed up and headed for home. The sport's governing body, FISA, said Mansell would not be called to account because no reports of the alleged attack had been received by the stewards. Meanwhile, in London, the RAC Motor Sports Association more or less said: "We're keeping our heads down on this one, ol' boy" when a spokesperson told *Autosport* (with barely concealed relief): "We can't get involved unless the stewards or FISA refer the matter to us."

In the absence (you might say 'blessed'



**James Hunt, despite his history with Mansell, was one of the few ex-F1 drivers who didn't blame him for the incident that would eventually force both cars out of the race**



**Senna was felt to be blameless in the contretemps by former world champions Keke Rosberg, John Surtees and Nelson Piquet, the latter Mansell's team-mate at the time**

absence') of social media and its vitriolic attitudes, impartial reporting by the motorsport weeklies 36 years ago meant experts such as spectating former world champions were the sole arbiters of the closest we'd get to a judgement one way or the other. Most blamed Mansell.

Let's put the incident into context. The Belgian GP was the third round of a championship being headed by Mansell. The Williams driver showed he had every intention of staying there as he claimed pole and took an immediate lead. Mansell's 1.6-second advantage at the start of the second lap was scuppered when Philippe Streiff lost control of his Tyrrell-Cosworth at the top of Eau Rouge, Ken Tyrrell's misery being compounded when Jonathan Palmer couldn't avoid his team-mate's wreckage. Both drivers were unhurt, but a red flag meant the grand prix

would be restarted as a fresh race.

Senna made the better getaway and jumped into the lead at La Source. Mansell was having none of it since, in his mind, the Williams-Honda FW11B was a superior car to the Lotus 99T powered by the same Japanese turbo V6. He could see that for himself as Senna used his exquisite skills to keep the yellow car, with its tricky active suspension, pointing in the right direction. Through Eau Rouge, up the hill to Les Combes and plunging down to Pouhon, Mansell was glued to Senna's gearbox as they rushed towards the right-hander at Fagnes. Suddenly, the Williams was alongside the Lotus and going for the outside line. Senna clipped the kerb at the apex, the two then making contact before pirouetting into the gravel.

Mansell would later explain that he had no

intention of overtaking at that spot, particularly at such an early stage of the race. But the opportunity had presented itself when, in Nigel's opinion, Ayrton slowed momentarily, possibly due to missing a gear. Either way, Senna was out on the spot, with Mansell eventually joining the retirement list because of damage caused by the incident. It was then that he vacated what ought to have been a winning car and marched down the pitlane in search of the Brazilian.

The subsequent terse interview turned out to be one of the few highlights of a race won easily by Alain Prost. The 10th and final finisher (Pascal Fabre in an AGS) came home five laps (at Spa!) behind the McLaren-TAG. With nothing much to talk or write about, the media turned to the experts for a view on the spectacular on-track weigh-in before the fight in the Lotus garage. John Surtees, Keke Rosberg and Nelson Piquet (who had a ringside view from the cockpit of his Williams) said Mansell had been foolhardy to try such a move. Only James Hunt found in his fellow countryman's favour.

This was interesting because Hunt was known for keeping his enthusiasm for Mansell in check. It was only seven months since the 1976 world champion had written a blistering article on the eve of the penultimate round of the 1986 championship which, at the time, Mansell looked like winning. Hunt used his piece in *The Times* to deconstruct the impression created elsewhere in the media that Nigel was the darling of the F1 paddock. Quite the reverse, according to Hunt. James clearly believed in what he was saying – just as he did during BBC TV commentary at Spa when claiming Senna was ill-advised to keep fighting for a corner he had clearly lost.

Surtees was less outspoken than usual thanks to remaining distracted by an incident the previous day while demonstrating a 1937 Mercedes W125. Taking the most powerful GP machine of its day around Spa was one thing; having to cope with an unusual pedal arrangement, quite another. "I kept saying to myself 'brake on the right, throttle in the middle. Brake on the right, throttle in the middle,'" explained Surtees, before admitting he had come close to writing off the silver masterpiece when he accidentally stamped on the throttle.

"Why was that, John?"

"Because, would you believe, a dust cart suddenly appeared in front of me!"

Motor racing just isn't the same, is it?



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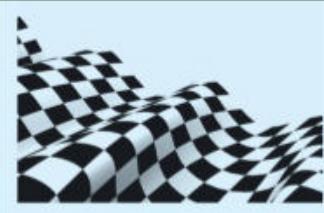
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FINISHING STRAIGHT

# RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 14

## THE DUTCH GP IN 5 KEY MOMENTS



Verstappen made it nine straight wins in 2023 and he remains the only driver to have triumphed at Zandvoort since its return to F1



Verstappen splashes away from his pit box after his late-race stop for full wets, just before the red flag was thrown



The Safety Car restart allowed Alonso to put some late-race pressure on Verstappen but Max repelled Fernando's best efforts

1

### Verstappen survives Alonso attention after late stoppage

**Regardless of any additional** pressure Max Verstappen might have been feeling as a packed home crowd – including members of the Dutch royal family – cheered him on at Zandvoort, he was sitting on an eight-race winning streak and still enjoying the best car on the grid. Moreover, he had annexed pole position without much to fear from any of his competitors bar McLaren's Lando Norris.

But the weather in northern Europe has been fickle this summer, thanks to the machinations of the jetstream, and Zandvoort's position on the North Sea coast renders it vulnerable to whatever is blowing in from the west. In this case it was two key deluges of rain at the beginning and end of the race.

As the first influx of rain hit while the grid was lining up, the chief question was how intense it might be and how long it might last. Thus Red Bull split its options, bringing in Sergio Pérez – who had started a mere seventh in any case – for intermediates at the end of the first lap. It wasn't the Red Bull crew's fastest stop ever but Pérez still emerged ahead of other early stoppers including

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. By the end of the second lap it was clear inters were the way to go so in came Verstappen – along with Fernando Alonso, who had executed what he described, with typical modesty, as "the pass of the month" on George Russell and Alex Albon on the banked Turn 3 on lap one, then swept past Norris just before stopping.

"Lining up and seeing the rain coming down, it was tough to make the right calls," said Verstappen. "I thought together with the team, the rain is coming, but maybe not enough to switch to an inter and maybe survive for a few laps. So we decided together to stay out for one more lap. That was the wrong call. But it made the race definitely more fun because I had to pass a few cars."

"Luckily, within a few laps, I closed down like 10 seconds of the gap. So that was very important for the rest of my race..."

Pérez's early stop enabled him to close down Norris and Russell, who didn't pit until the end of lap three, while Verstappen was typically forceful in dispatching Pierre Gasly and the non-stopper Zhou Guanyu. It would prove to be a short stint in

the lead for Pérez since the track began to dry as the lap count reached double digits and those who had persisted on slicks started to light up the timing screens. Pérez – under instructions to tyre-save in case further rain struck – lost 10s of his advantage to Verstappen before they both pitted for slicks and Max emerged 2.5s ahead.

Following a brief Safety Car interlude after Logan Sargeant crashed out, Max drove away leaving Pérez to fend off Alonso until the rain returned with a vengeance in the final phase of the race. At first inters appeared to be the right choice but Red Bull didn't have Pérez's ready in time and he lost further ground to Max before spinning and giving up second place to Alonso. In a subsequent stop for wets – just before a red flag as Guanyu hit the wall – Pérez incurred a penalty for speeding in the pitlane which would consign him to fourth in the final reckoning.

The red flag and subsequent Safety Car restart brought Alonso back into contention for the win but, try as he might – and he did – there was no way past Verstappen.

## 2 Wolff blasts "sub-par" Mercedes strategy

**George Russell** started the Dutch Grand Prix third and therefore had a reasonable chance at converting that position into a podium, while on race day Lewis Hamilton ran at a pace comparable to eventual winner Max Verstappen at times. And yet Russell finished 17th, the last classified runner, and Hamilton was sixth. Little wonder team boss Toto Wolff was fuming after the fact.

Hamilton didn't help his cause by taking a wrong turn in setup on Friday and qualifying 13th. But the real problem was the team's inertia in reading the intensity and duration of the shower which hit at the start, making the call to pit both cars for intermediates at least a lap too late. While the rain then eased off and the track began to dry, the damage had already been done – Russell lost a whole minute even before he pitted. Stopping a lap before Russell lessened the damage for Hamilton even though he briefly dropped to the tail of the field.

"I think we stayed out catastrophically too long," said Wolff. "We got it completely wrong. We'll review thoroughly. The situation is never one person or one department. It's the communications between driver, pitwall, strategy, weather and then all of us taking decisions."

"That was absolutely sub-par from all of us, and that includes me."

Russell's recovery drive was nullified when he suffered a puncture in contact with Lando Norris's McLaren at the restart after the red flag. Hamilton's pace in the dry phase of the race was brisk enough for him to climb to sixth place and he suggested afterwards that, but for the tardy pit call

**By staying out longer when the early rain came, Russell was able to dive inside Norris at Turn 1 to take a very brief lead**



**Mercedes admitted that it stayed out too long when the rain first came and it was Russell who was hardest hit by that call**



**Hamilton, like many, had a moment on the inters before the red flag. Sixth, from 13th on the grid, wasn't a bad return for Lewis**

at the beginning, he had the speed to challenge the podium finishers.

"I feel like today was redemption, in the sense of it was terrible yesterday, we managed to dial the car in a bit better today and overtook a bunch of people," said Hamilton. "Today I had the pace. I was on pace with Max in the race, we were just out of position. To start 13th, I was dead last at one point, and get back up to sixth, yeah, I'm happy with that."

## 3 Did Ferrari really have the "sixth fastest" car?

**It was a race of two** garages for Ferrari as Carlos Sainz's side executed neatly to claim fifth place despite, in Sainz's own words, having "the sixth-fastest car" this weekend. Meanwhile Charles



FINISHING STRAIGHT

# RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 14

Leclerc was a mid-race retirement after a litany of errors throughout the weekend: he crashed out of Q3, saying his SF-23 was "difficult to drive" in the low-downforce trim Ferrari had chosen; he lost an estimated 60 points of downforce when a moment of snap oversteer at Turn 12 pitched him into Oscar Piastri's McLaren; and he took his own team by surprise when he announced his arrival in the pits for intermediates at the end of the first lap.

The keyboard warriors of social media were triggered by this latter act, as Charles sat with the seconds ticking by while the pit crew scurried for the right tyres. GP Racing would contend, however, that Leclerc over-riding the pitwall based on actual experience of track conditions rather than meekly submitting to a poor call (Ferrari was minded to ride out the conditions, and look what that did to Mercedes) was a positive development.

While going to intermediates promptly at this point was beneficial to Sergio Pérez, the damage to Leclerc's car was such that he lapped inconsistently thereafter and slid down the field, hanging on in the hope of rain. When it looked like that wouldn't come, the team called him in to retire on lap 41 – only for the heavens to finally oblige a few minutes later.

Aside from misreading the conditions here and at the beginning, Ferrari generally made the right calls in changing conditions, managing the transition to full wets at the right time to enable Sainz to stay in the hunt for fifth place.

"I know at some point it looked that we even could fight for a podium," said Sainz, "but the reality is that when the race was settled when you look at our pace we were just nowhere. Today we nailed the calls, except for the first stop – we should have boxed on the first lap and we stayed out one extra lap. Everything else, we nailed it."

4

## Lawson drafted in to replace injured Ricciardo

Three rounds into his Formula 1 return, Daniel Ricciardo had an unfortunate shunt into the barriers at Turn 3 when he locked the front wheels of his AlphaTauri avoiding Oscar Piastri's stranded McLaren during second practice.

The impact jarred the steering wheel enough to break a metacarpal bone in Ricciardo's left

hand, necessitating a trip to Barcelona where he was entrusted to Dr Xavier Mir, the specialist who attended to Lance Stroll's injury before the start of this season.

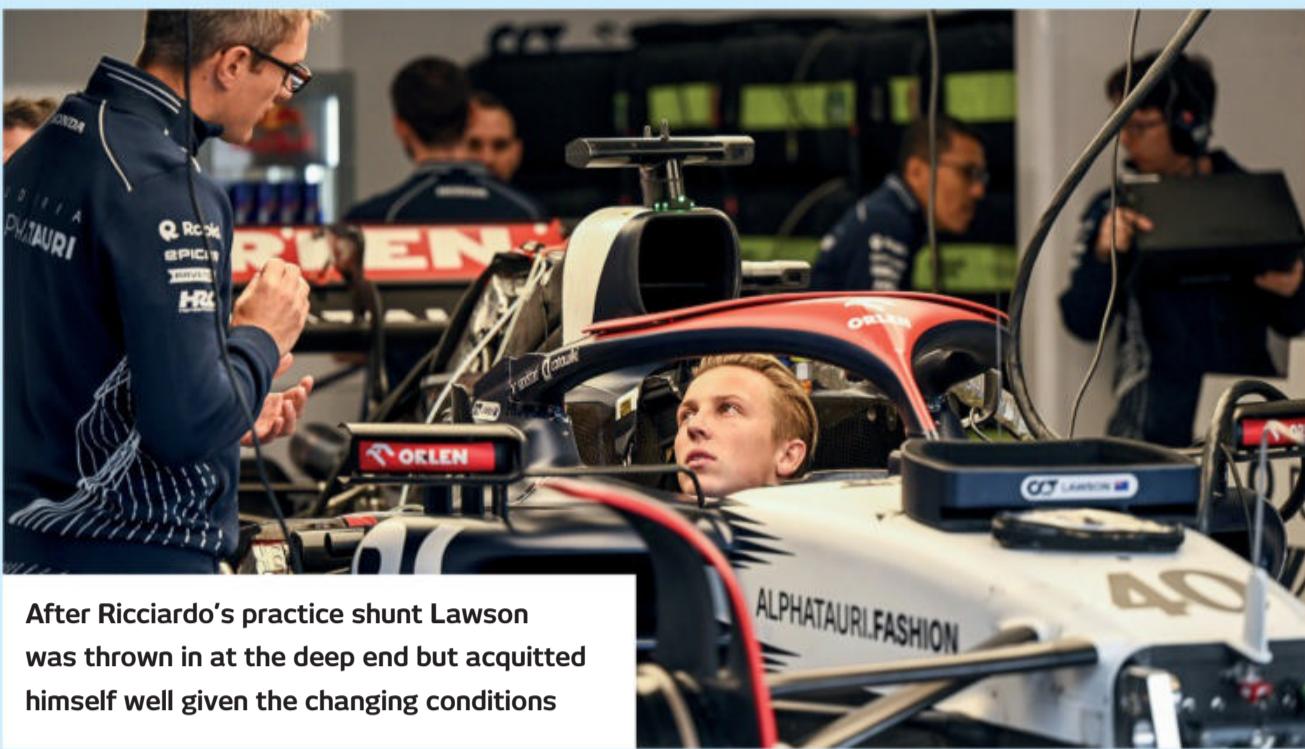
In Ricciardo's place came Red Bull junior Liam Lawson, the New Zealander currently contesting Super Formula in Japan. The auguries were not good: given a wet track on Saturday, Lawson could have been expected to find the wall (or the gravel) rather quickly on first acquaintance with the AT04 but he kept it clean until spinning and bringing



It was another weekend to forget for Leclerc, starting with this off on Friday. He retired from the race when well down the field



Starting sixth, Sainz was pleased with the majority of Ferrari's calls during the race which enabled him to come home in fifth



After Ricciardo's practice shunt Lawson was thrown in at the deep end but acquitted himself well given the changing conditions

out a red flag at the end of FP3. In qualifying, as expected, he didn't make it beyond Q1 – indeed, his first laps in dry conditions would be on the way to the grid on Sunday.

Come the race, Lawson acquitted himself decently enough – calling for inters at what proved to be the right time, only to be over-ruled by the team. An interminably slow double-stack followed, exacerbated when Yuki Tsunoda's car required a front-wing adjustment and Lawson was penalised for impeding Kevin Magnussen's Haas on the way out.

Lawson managed the transition to drier conditions well with some tyre coaching by engineer Pierre Hamelin and, later on, gamely took on Charles Leclerc and Valtteri Bottas. Coming home 13th of the 17th runners was a reasonable return given his experience at this level.

"I felt a lot more comfortable than yesterday," he said. "You always look back, and I'll reflect on this. There's definitely things I would have liked to do better, but I think I'm reasonably satisfied."

**Aston Martin introduced a rear winglet for Zandvoort but the experiment was short-lived as it only ran during Friday practice**



## RESULTS ROUND 14

ZANDVOORT / 27.08.23 / 72 LAPS



1st	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	2h24m04.411s
2nd	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	+3.744s
3rd	Pierre Gasly	Alpine	+7.058s
4th	Sergio Pérez	Red Bull	+10.068s*
5th	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	+12.541s
6th	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+13.209s
7th	Lando Norris	McLaren	+13.232s
8th	Alex Albon	Williams	+15.155s
9th	Oscar Piastri	McLaren	+16.580s
10th	Esteban Ocon	Alpine	+18.346s
11th	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	+20.087s
12th	Nico Hülkenberg	Haas	+20.840s
13th	Liam Lawson	AlphaTauri	+26.147s
14th	Valtteri Bottas	Alfa Romeo	+27.388s
15th	Yuki Tsunoda	AlphaTauri	+29.893s**
16th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+31.410s***
17th	George Russell	Mercedes	+55.754s

\*includes 5s penalty for speeding in the pitlane \*\*includes 5s penalty for causing a collision \*\*\*includes 5s penalty for falling more than 10 car lengths behind Safety Car

## 5 Aston sets aside bow tie experiment

**Despite the cost cap** and a tight regulatory box, teams are still pushing the boundaries of aerodynamic design – ahead of the Dutch GP the FIA announced a clampdown on what it called "regions of purposely designed localised compliance" (in other words, making wings flex in a way which evades the static tests). Keen-eyed observers also noted a tiny new wing element under the rear crash structure of the Aston Martins.

While the team downplayed the significance of the bow tie-shaped winglet, adding it required some pit equipment to be redesigned because it's located at the rear jacking point. It follows, therefore, that the component must have some benefit in order to justify the costs. In use, though, the winglet began to crack and it was removed after Friday practice.

"It was more a test item," said Aston Martin performance director Tom McCullough. "So just trying to exploit all the little areas in the rules that allow you to sneak as much performance in as you can. We're going to look at a more robust solution."

### Retirements

Zhou Guanyu	Alfa Romeo	62 laps/accident
Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	41 laps/floor damage
Logan Sargeant	Williams	14 laps/accident

### Fastest lap

Fernando Alonso 1m13.837s on lap 56

### TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



CLIMATE	AIR TEMP	TRACK TEMP
Variable	17°C	25°C

### DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1 Verstappen	339pts	12 Piastri	36pts
2 Pérez	201pts	13 Albon	15pts
3 Alonso	168pts	14 Hülkenberg	9pts
4 Hamilton	156pts	15 Bottas	5pts
5 Sainz	102pts	16 Guanyu	4pts
6 Leclerc	99pts	17 Tsunoda	3pts
7 Russell	99pts	18 Magnussen	2pts
8 Norris	75pts	19 Sargeant	0pts
9 Stroll	47pts	20 De Vries	0pts
10 Gasly	37pts	21 Ricciardo	0pts
11 Ocon	36pts	22 Lawson	0pts

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FINISHING STRAIGHT

# RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 15

## THE ITALIAN GP IN 5 KEY MOMENTS



**It's a 10 out of 10 for Verstappen. Max's record-breaking 10 consecutive victories moves him a step closer to a third world title**

### 1 Ferrari empties the tank as Max makes a perfect 10

**Max Verstappen's record-breaking** winning streak continued at Monza as he registered a 10th consecutive victory. Such milestones might not matter to everyone – Mercedes' Toto Wolff described it as "irrelevant" and "for Wikipedia" – but it mattered to Ferrari. Whether the Scuderia was protecting Alberto Ascari's record of nine

**Polesitter Sainz led for 14 laps until his tyres cried enough, causing this lock up at Turn 1. Max would definitely move ahead at the second chicane**

consecutive grand prix wins from 1952-53 (a stat which stands provided you exclude, as most do, the historically anomalous Indy 500s which counted towards the world championship) or simply taking a proud stand on home turf, it poured all the resources it could muster into snatching victory at *la pista magica*.

For a few glorious moments Carlos Sainz thought he might manage it, too. Armed, like team-mate Charles Leclerc, with a fresh power unit for the weekend and a low-drag wing package developed specifically for this circuit, Sainz placed his car on pole and spent much of the first portion of the race engaged in a stout and thrilling defence of his lead against Verstappen. The SF-23 is less nervous at low-downforce tracks, and Ferrari had also invested much time in optimising the suspension dynamics to ride the kerbs better – crucial at a venue with three key chicanes and another sequence of corners, the Lesmos, where fast exits involve a trip across the rumble strips.

Once the race got going after a 20-minute delay, caused by a combination of Yuki Tsunoda's AlphaTauri breaking down on the formation lap and a malfunction on the start-light gantry, it was largely a matter of staving off the inevitable. Sainz had outqualified Verstappen by mere fractions and



**The passionate Ferrari fans did at least see their beloved team try its hardest to claim a win on home soil, only to fall short again**

Red Bull has long had enough advantage in hand to focus on race pace. At Turn 1 Sainz set out his stall for what was to follow, 'parking the bus' at the approach and apex, denying Max a route around the Ferrari. Once Leclerc had fended off the challenge of fourth-placed George Russell's Mercedes he quietly enjoyed a tow from the Red Bull as Russell very gradually dropped away.

Tyre degradation was much higher than expected given the 40C track temperature and compounds a step softer than last year's race. Sainz's vigorous defence was asking too much of his left-rear on

what was anticipated to be a one-stop race in which all of the leading runners bar Lewis Hamilton (eighth on the grid) started on mediums. Those pitstops were expected at around lap 20 but by the beginning of lap 15 Leclerc had fallen out of DRS range and Sainz had a massive lock-up into Turn 1. Verstappen briefly got ahead under traction at the exit but Sainz took advantage of his skinny wings and new engine to pull alongside again before Max sealed the deal into the second chicane.

Though the undercut was powerful it was too early to pit, thanks to the presence of hard-shod Valtteri Bottas right where the frontrunners would likely exit after a stop. A lap later Sergio Pérez finally got past Russell at Turn 1, bringing the second Red Bull into play for the podium. When Sainz pitted at the end of lap 19 he was held in the box as Russell went by, which nearly cost him track position to his team-mate when Leclerc pitted a lap later.

From this point on the only questions to settle were whether both Ferraris would finish on the podium or, if just one, who would be driving it. Once Pérez got by them both, the final laps were tense as Sainz and Leclerc appeared to disregard instructions from the pitwall to take "no risk at all", nearly colliding on several occasions. Sainz won the lunge to the tape to secure third place by 0.2s.



**It was a scrappy GP for the Mercedes duo (above). Hamilton would tangle with Piastri (right) and Russell with Ocon (below)**



## 2 Scrappy day for draggy Mercs

**George Russell and Lewis Hamilton** qualified decently and finished fifth and sixth, reasonable results given the notorious dragginess of the W14, but both drivers have raced better elsewhere.

Russell qualified an impressive fourth, ahead of the faster Red Bull of Sergio Pérez, and he skilfully kept Pérez at bay for much of his opening stint apart from a brief lapse when they both went over the Turn 1 run-off together. Checo finally got by at the beginning of lap 16, and then only in a risky move when he annexed the inside line at the entry to Turn 1, running a back wheel over the grass where the track narrows at the end of the pit exit.

Given the power of the undercut, Russell was instructed to make the most of his in-lap and out-lap around his stop at the end of lap 19. He emerged alongside the yet-to-pit Alpine of Esteban Ocon and skittered over the run-off at Turn 1 in his eagerness to get by, incurring a five-second penalty for leaving the track and gaining an advantage. But he neutralised the impact of this by passing Alex Albon's Williams and building a sufficient gap as



McLaren's Lando Norris struggled to follow suit.

"I knew that there had to be a maximised out-lap," said Russell. "I came out right behind or next to Ocon and I knew if I fell behind him, my chance to undercut the guys ahead would disappear. So I went in very hot into Turn 1, knowing there was a risk to miss the corner, and that's what happened."

Hamilton also had an uncharacteristically messy race. A contra-strategy in which he started on hards called for a long first stint, and a brief spell in the lead after the medium runners ahead pitted. Despite vocal concerns about the potential to do 23 laps on the mediums he made the strategy work but managed to remove half of Oscar Piastri's front wing in a rather desperate lunge at the second chicane, earning himself a five-second penalty. Crucially, he got by Norris and Albon and built a margin to retain sixth place at the flag.

## 3 McLaren team boss laments "unacceptable" clash

**After an encouraging upturn in recent rounds, McLaren's recovery went on hiatus at a circuit which was always unlikely to favour the**



FINISHING STRAIGHT

# RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 15



still-draggy MCL60. The team's issues were compounded by Oscar Piastri losing ground after being struck by Lewis Hamilton – an incident in which Oscar was blameless – and a bout of clumsy internecine warfare when Piastri nearly took out team-mate Norris at Turn 1 after leaving the pits.

Piastri and Norris qualified seventh and ninth but Norris took advantage of Lewis Hamilton being an outlier on hard-compound tyres to slip by into eighth at the start. Piastri briefly passed Alex Albon's Williams at the start before Albon reclaimed sixth at the second chicane on lap two. A long and frustrating first stint eventuated in which neither McLaren could get by until Albon pitted at the end of lap 18.

Once the McLarens were running in clear air Norris began to lobby the pitwall that he had more pace and the team duly facilitated an undercut by pitting him first, at the end of lap 22. When Piastri pitted a lap later he emerged almost alongside his team-mate and made what appeared to be a rather desperate lunge into Turn 1, claiming the inside line and tapping his team-mate's sidepod as they snaked around to the second part of the chicane.

Norris remained ahead and pulled clear, though he spent virtually the balance of the race staring at



Monza was always going to stall McLaren's recovery but Stella (above) was also unhappy with contact between his drivers

Albon's rear wing. Piastri fell back into the clutches of Lewis Hamilton and lost the left-hand side of his front wing as the Mercedes veered fractionally to the right under braking for the second chicane, a move for which Hamilton later apologised. A stop to replace the wing consigned Piastri to a position outside the points.

"There should never be contact between two

McLaren cars," said team principal Andrea Stella. "What is important is to have clear parameters as to what you deem acceptable and what you deem unacceptable."

## 4 Albon maximises Williams strengths on difficult day

For several seasons now, slipperiness in a straight line has been a Williams strong suit; downforce, traction and balance not so much. At a circuit like Monza this puts the onus on the team and drivers to maximise the potential to score points and Alex Albon obliged with a combative drive to seventh place. Lack of downforce meant tyre degradation was likely to hit Williams hard and so it was – magnified, in Albon's case, by an early pitstop to avoid being undercut by the pursuing McLarens of Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris.

Low downforce levels also meant a tricky balancing act at the final corner, now renamed in honour of the late Michele Alboreto – difficulty in getting a good drive out of this corner made Albon vulnerable on the main straight. But neither



Albon lost out briefly to Piastri at the start but once back ahead held first the Australian and then Norris (above) at bay for seventh

McLaren could summon the straightline speed to make a pass stick, making the final stint particularly frustrating for Norris.

"We were really weak in the last corner," said Albon. "We were good through Ascari but slow in Turn 11 and they would always catch me out through there. The [tyre] degradation was huge. On the laps to the grid we thought, 'This is going to be a really tough race.' We didn't have the pace today, but we had the straightline speed and that was what kept Lando behind."

"We are better than we were last year [in terms of downforce] but, especially when the track gets hot and the deg is high, we really struggle. This was a race where we struggled on a track that should suit us. I think if the track were 20 degrees cooler we would have been really fast."

## 5 Badass Bottas battles to final point

Valtteri Bottas claimed his first points finish since the Canadian GP back in June as Alfa Romeo



celebrated its home grand prix with a patriotic one-off livery. Well, as patriotic as possible given how much real estate on contemporary F1 cars must be left unpainted to save weight...

The team has been languishing in the bottom quarter of the grid of late and Bottas could manage no higher than 14th on the grid – but, like Lewis Hamilton and Kevin Magnussen, he ran a contra strategy in which he started on the hard-compound tyres. Bottas enjoyed the full benefits of the strategy as he gained track position when cars ahead pitted – and then kept it.

But there was a genuine bit of overtaking to do to nail the final point – although it went unseen on the world TV feed which, at the time, was captivated by Carlos Sainz fighting off the attentions of Sergio Pérez and Charles Leclerc. Having hunted down Logan Sargeant's 10th-placed Williams, Bottas executed a neat pass around the outside of Turn 1, at the beginning of lap 43. Sargeant then clattered into his sidepod while trying to retake the position at the next chicane, earning himself a penalty.

"At the end I think he had more damage," said Bottas, "so it's all good."



Bottas (left) put in a great overtake on lap 43 to claim the final point as Alfa celebrated its home GP with a patriotic livery (above)

## RESULTS ROUND 15

MONZA / 03.09.23 / 51 LAPS



1st	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	1h13m41.4143s
2nd	Sergio Pérez	Red Bull	+6.054s
3rd	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	+11.193s
4th	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	+11.377s
5th	George Russell	Mercedes	+23.028s*
6th	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+42.679s**
7th	Alex Albon	Williams	+45.106s
8th	Lando Norris	McLaren	+45.449s
9th	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	+46.294s
10th	Valtteri Bottas	Alfa Romeo	+64.056s
11th	Liam Lawson	AlphaTauri	+70.638s
12th	Oscar Piastri	McLaren	+73.074s*
13th	Logan Sargeant	Williams	+78.557s**
14th	Zhou Guanyu	Alfa Romeo	+80.164s
15th	Pierre Gasly	Alpine	+82.510s
16th	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	+87.266s
17th	Nico Hülkenberg	Haas	+1 lap
18th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+1 lap

### Retirements

Esteban Ocon Alpine 39 laps/steering

Yuki Tsunoda AlphaTauri did not start/power unit

### Fastest lap

Oscar Piastri 1m25.072s on lap 43

### TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



Hard (C3) Medium (C4) Soft (C5) Inter Wet

### CLIMATE AIR TEMP TRACK TEMP

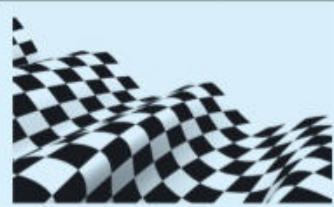
Sunny	31°C	40°C
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### DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1 Verstappen	364pts	12 Piastri	36pts
2 Pérez	219pts	13 Albon	21pts
3 Alonso	170pts	14 Hülkenberg	9pts
4 Hamilton	164pts	15 Bottas	6pts
5 Sainz	117pts	16 Guanyu	4pts
6 Leclerc	111pts	17 Tsunoda	3pts
7 Russell	109pts	18 Magnussen	2pts
8 Norris	79pts	19 Sargeant	0pts
9 Stroll	47pts	20 Lawson	0pts
10 Gasly	37pts	21 De Vries	0pts
11 Ocon	36pts	22 Ricciardo	0pts



\*includes 5s penalty for leaving the track and gaining an advantage  
\*\*includes 5s penalty for causing a collision



FINISHING STRAIGHT

## RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 17

## JAPANESE GP

22-24 September 2023  
Suzuka

PICTURE: ANDY HONE. ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDIDGE



## THE MAIN EVENT

While **Suzuka first hosted** a grand prix in 1987, the history of this popular track dates back over three decades earlier. In 1954, company founder Soichiro Honda visited the Isle of Man TT with a view to proving his motorcycles there. Blown away by what he saw, Honda returned to Japan with two suitcases of components, ditching a third containing his clothes in Rome when his connecting airline told him he could only bring two. Five years later, when the first works Honda TT effort fell short, the boss decided to build his own circuit to fast-track bike and car development.

Local opposition dictated a change of location from agricultural land to an unfavourable area in the local foothills. One solution to maximise the utility of the site involved a circuit design with three crossovers, but costs and technological limitations led architect John Hugenholtz to slim it down to the single one seen today.

## 2022 RACE RECAP

Max Verstappen won from pole position but confusion reigned over whether this was enough for him to win his second consecutive drivers' title. Owing to a red flag on the second lap (after Carlos Sainz aquaplaned into the barriers on lap one) and a lengthy stoppage, the rain-affected race hit the three-hour time limit and ended after just 28 laps.

While many fans and broadcasters (and, indeed, teams) believed this meant only half points would be awarded, a recent tweak to the rules meant it qualified for full points. Max learned of his second title mid-way through his post-race interview by a confused Johnny Herbert.

## KEY CORNER: TURNS 16/17

Reprofiled many times, this iconic chicane – scene of Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna's infamous championship deciding coming-together in 1989 – is still a key but high-risk overtaking point.



## THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE

2022  
Max  
Red Bull2019  
Valtteri  
Bottas  
Mercedes2018  
Lewis  
Hamilton  
Mercedes2017  
Lewis  
Hamilton  
Mercedes2016  
Nico  
Rosberg  
Mercedes

## RACE DATA

**Venue** Suzuka International Racing Course  
**First GP** 1987  
**Number of laps** 53  
**Circuit length** 3.608 miles  
**Race distance** 191.053 miles  
**Lap record** 1m30.983s  
Lewis Hamilton (2019)  
**F1 races held** 32  
**Winners from pole** 16  
**Pirelli compounds** C1, C2, C3

## CAR PERFORMANCE

**Downforce level** High  
**Cooling requirement** Medium  
**Full throttle** 66%  
**Top speed** 204mph  
**Average speed** 141mph

## TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

**Friday** 22 September  
**Practice 1** 03:30-04:30  
**Practice 2** 07:30-08:30  
**Saturday** 23 September  
**Practice 3** 03:30-04:30  
**Qualifying** 07:00-08:00  
**Sunday** 24 September  
**Race** 06:00  
**Live coverage** Sky Sports F1  
**Highlights** Channel 4

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- X 5 posts per week on All platforms
- Building and management of Social Media pages across most platforms

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# RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 18

## QATAR GP

6-8 October 2023  
Losail International Circuit

PICTURES: ANDY HONE; MOTORSPORT IMAGES ARCHIVE. ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDIDGE



### THE MAIN EVENT

**Originally constructed with** motorcycle racing in mind, Losail International Circuit also hosted the first floodlit MotoGP night race in 2008 when Qatar's searingly hot daytime temperatures proved unfavourable to the competitors. In 2021 it joined the Formula 1 calendar as Qatar sought to expand its sporting portfolio, signing a 10-year deal to host grands prix within the borders of the Arabian state.

At the time the plan was for Losail to be a stopgap before the Qatar Grand Prix moved to a new-build location but this has now changed. Qatar skipped 2022 – it was hosting another popular sporting event involving a ball – and has now decided to upgrade the existing venue with more and better spectator facilities. While the circuit layout remains unchanged, the grandstands have been redeveloped to accommodate 40,000 spectators (up from 7,500) and, crucially, the infrastructure has been improved so they can get in and out...

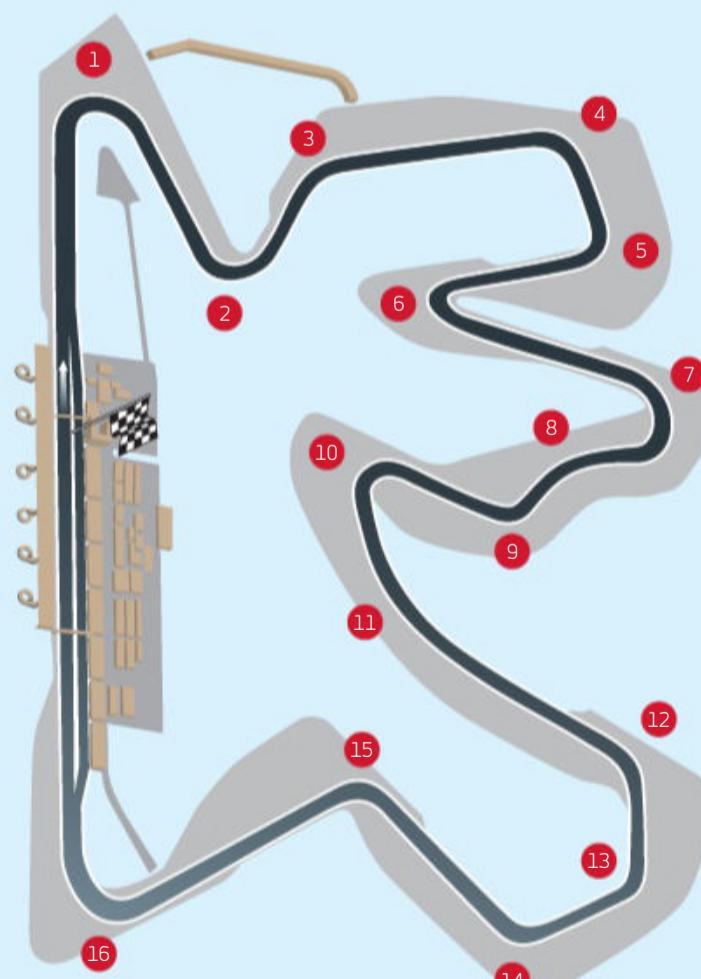
### 2021 RACE RECAP

Coming from victory in Brazil, Lewis Hamilton ate further into Max Verstappen's world championship lead by winning from pole position in Qatar. Although Max had a grid penalty for failing to slow for yellow flags in Q3, Mercedes had the edge on pace anyway on a hot night in Losail.

While Verstappen raced to second, 25s down on Hamilton, the grand prix was notable for one more feature beyond four rather worrying tyre failures: Fernando Alonso recorded his first podium finish since 2014.

### KEY CORNER: TURN 10

This quick corner is a momentum-preservation exercise because the previous two turns are taken flat. What makes it even tougher is that track limits will be policed at the exit of the corner.



### RACE DATA

**Venue** Losail International Circuit  
**First GP** 2021  
**Number of laps** 57  
**Circuit length** 3.342 miles  
**Race distance** 190.549 miles  
**Lap record** 1m23.196s  
Max Verstappen (2019)  
**F1 races held** 1  
**Winners from pole** 1  
**Pirelli compounds** C1, C2, C3

### CAR PERFORMANCE

**Downforce level** High  
**Cooling requirement** Medium  
**Full throttle** 68%  
**Top speed** 199mph  
**Average speed** 134mph

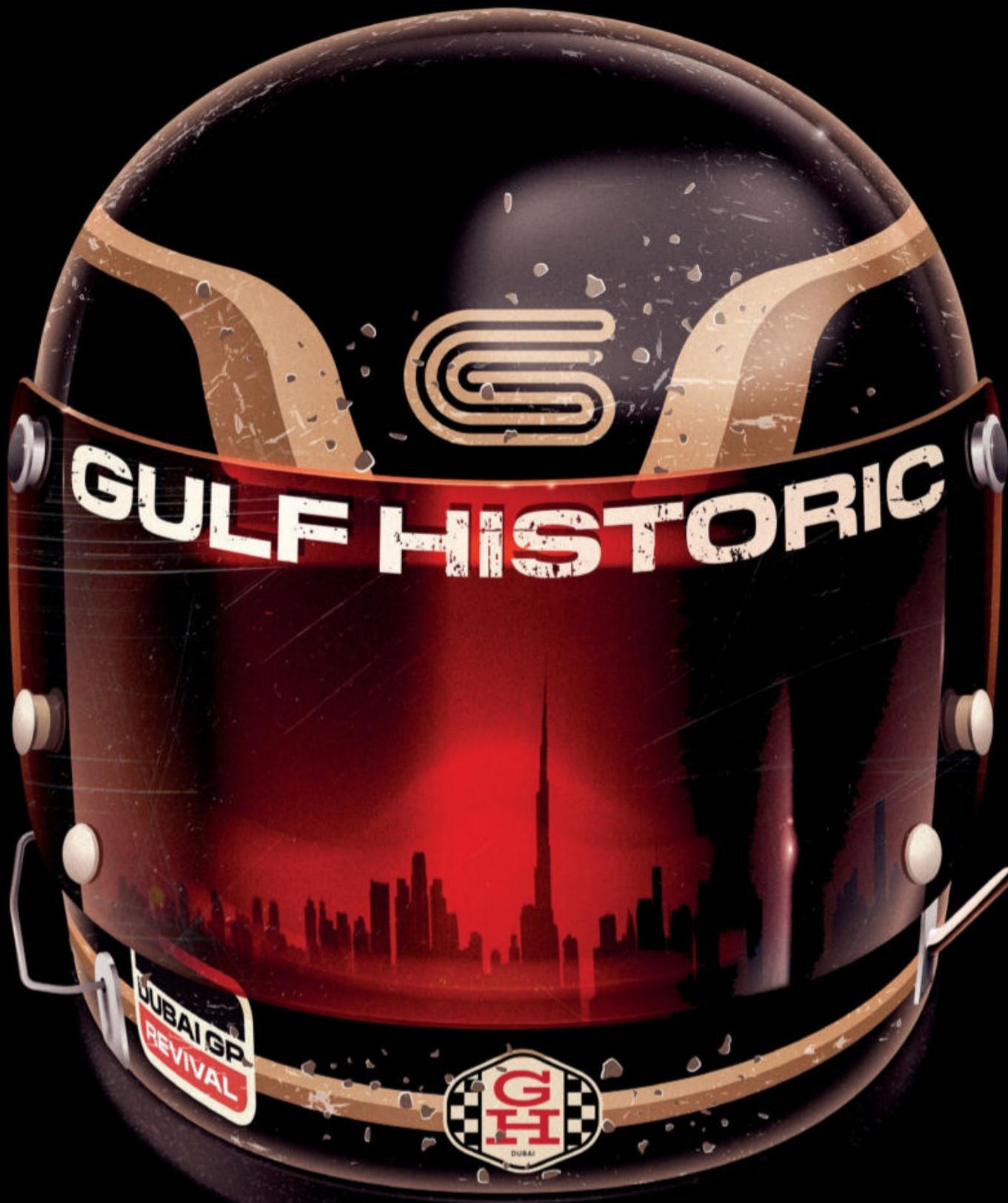
### TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

**Friday** 6 October  
**Practice 1** 14:30-15:30  
**Qualifying** 18:00-19:00  
**Saturday** 7 October  
**Sprint shootout** 14:00-14:44  
**Sprint** 18:30-19:30  
**Sunday** 8 October  
**Race** 18:00  
**Live coverage** Sky Sports F1  
**Highlights** Channel 4

### THE PAST WINNER HERE



2021  
Lewis  
Hamilton  
Mercedes



# DUBAI 3 HOUR

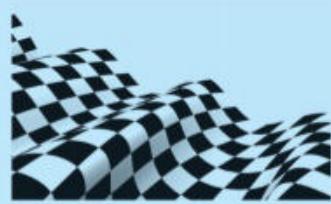
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## GEAR UP

# F1 UPGRADES

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### LANDO NORRIS – A BIOGRAPHY

**Author** Ben Hunt

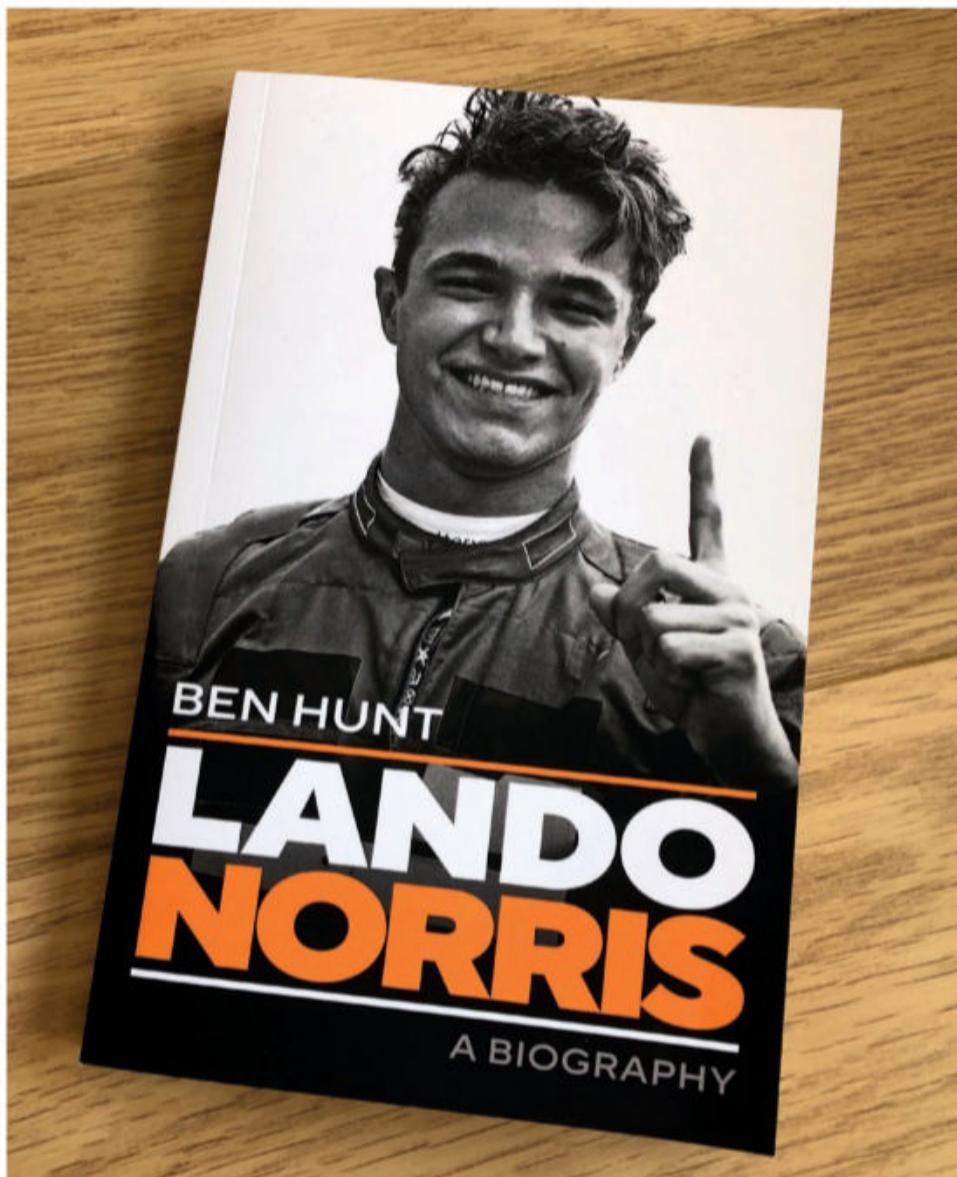
**Price** £14.99

[iconbooks.com](http://iconbooks.com)

**You know you've arrived** as a sports personality when people start writing biographies of you. Lando Norris has, of course, marked himself out as a bona-fide star of the present as well as the future so it's no surprise to find a book about him making its way onto the shelves. This is an unofficial biography so you won't find any hidden childhood traumas lurking within but it's been written by one of F1's permanent press corps

who knows Lando well. Ben Hunt is currently *The Sun*'s F1 correspondent so he knows how to tell a story economically and the narrative zips along at pace.

Although the opening chapters cover his background and upbringing, and his route up the racing ladder, the majority of the book details Lando's F1 career. That might only have started for real in 2019 but it's been a fascinating journey so far...



### AVI-8 FLYBOY CAPCOM 1942 LIMITED EDITION

**Price** £365-£385

[avi-8.co.uk](http://avi-8.co.uk)

**Readers of a certain age** with a penchant for video gaming might associate the notion of 'game and watch' with the handheld LCD-screen electronic games sold by Nintendo in the 1980s. This latest work by the aviation-themed watch brand AVI-8 combines timekeeping and gaming in a rather different way. A limited-edition timepiece available in two different colourways, each limited to 300, it's a collaboration with Capcom and features graphics inspired by the Japanese video game company's

seminal scrolling shoot-'em up 1942.

Designed to evoke 8-bit arcade culture, the watch is powered by a Seiko TMI NH35 self-winding movement enclosed by a 41mm marine-grade stainless steel casing with a scratch-resistant sapphire dome. Each one comes with a stainless steel bracelet and an alternative fabric strap featuring details from the game. The packaging includes comic book-style artwork commissioned by the Spanish artist Nache Ramos.

## GEORGE RUSSELL – A BIOGRAPHY

**Author** James Gray

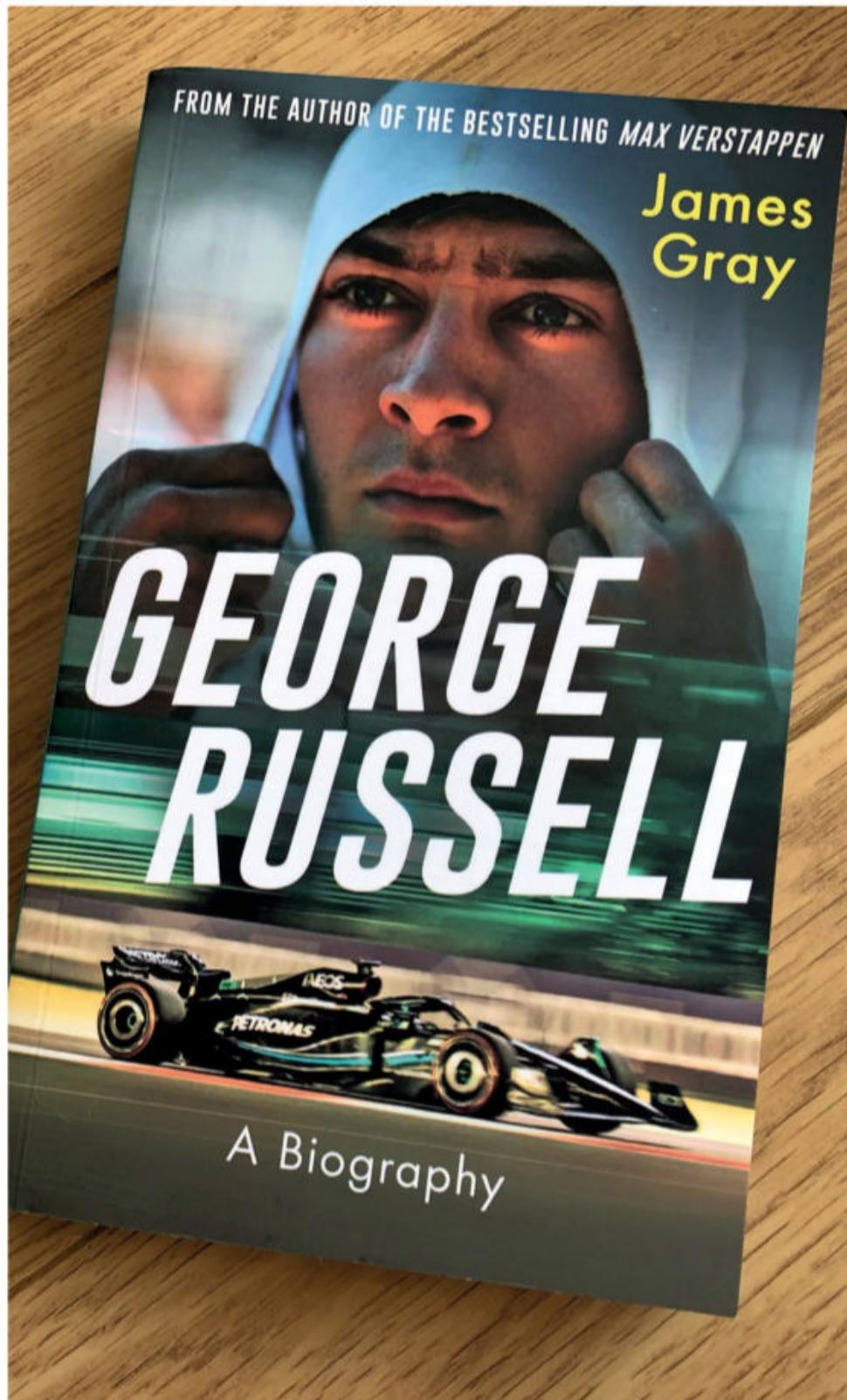
**Price** £14.99

[iconbooks.com](http://iconbooks.com)

**You wait ages for a** driver biography and then two come along at once. Well, three if you include the Charles Leclerc one which arrived at the GP Racing offices with an enormous crease along the cover. Motivated no doubt by the success of *Drive to Survive*, mainstream publishers are getting in on a business which was once the preserve of Haynes and the late, great Christopher Hilton. Multi-sports journalist James Gray covers

F1 for the *i* newspaper and already has a biography of Max Verstappen under his belt.

This is a slightly chunkier tome than the Lando Norris biography also featured on these pages and goes into more detail about Russell's life and career before his arrival of the F1 scene. Gray is not among the regular grand prix attendees but he knows his subject well enough and the depth of research is obvious on the page.



## RAYMOND WEIL FREELANCER POP LIMITED EDITION

**Price** £3495

[raymond-weil.co.uk](http://raymond-weil.co.uk)

**In partnership with** Raymond Weil ambassadors Sand Sax (a saxophonist) and Victor Le Douarec (a pianist), the Swiss watch brand has created a limited-edition timepiece designed to pay homage to the world of live music. GP Racing would advise readers to wear something less rarefied in the moshpit of a Nine Inch Nail gig, however...

Limited to 400 pieces, the Freelancer Pop Bi-Compax

Chronograph features a black gradient dial with bright turquoise-accented chronograph and pulsometer counters, set within a 43.5mm brushed titanium case (no doubt David Guetta will be keen to get his hands on one) with matching five-bar strap. On the back, a sapphire crystal portal offers a glimpse of the 27-jewel RW5030 movement which in this timepiece has a skeletonised rotor and more turquoise accents within.



FINISHING STRAIGHT

# THE FINAL LAP



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## FLAT CHAT

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PICTURES



## A SLIM CHANCE OF REWRITING F1 HISTORY

**Felipe Massa** insists that **money** is not motivating his legal challenge against the FIA and Formula 1. That's despite his sizeable representation claiming the Brazilian has missed out on "tens of millions of euros" for not having been crowned an F1 champion. Disputing the result of the 2008 season, which he lost by a single point to McLaren driver Lewis Hamilton, is instead about seeking "justice for the sport".

Massa argues that recently circulated interviews with Bernie Ecclestone and the late Max Mosley prove they knew in good time that Renault's Nelson Piquet Jr crashed deliberately in Singapore. Therefore, the race result (where Hamilton scored six points, Massa nil) should be tossed in the bin.

There's genuine reason to believe Massa when he says cash isn't king. If he is to take F1 and the governing body to courts around the world,



**Massa leading Hamilton in the early stages of the 2008 Singapore GP, before the Safety Car appeared after Piquet's 'crash'**

the receipts will pile up and this isn't some 'no win, no fee' small-claims fodder. FIA legislation dictates that after a year's awards ceremony (in this case, 12 December 2008), the result is set in stone. Massa must know the odds of success and rewriting history 15 years later are extremely poor. And if justice really is the goal, he morally cannot accept any out-of-court settlement if it were ever offered. So, he really should be ready to lose a fistful of dollars.

Since Massa is effectively biting the hand

that feeds him by formally challenging F1, it's no surprise that his paddock pass has been turned off. He and Formula 1 have 'mutually agreed' he should no longer attend grands prix in his paid gig as a championship ambassador. Although, for what it's worth, Massa was already publicly speaking out against 'Crashgate' this season, having done so while appearing in front of guests on a superyacht rented by the Qatars in Monaco.

As it happens, 92-year-old Ecclestone now claims he doesn't remember giving the critical interview earlier this year that prompted Massa to consider his legal options. Despite this, and everything else going against Massa, what if he was somehow, quite miraculously, to come up trumps?

Only once before has a world championship GP been effectively annulled: the 1981 season-opening bout at Kyalami, run to Formula Libre rules amid the FISA-FOCA war. But, as per Brabham and

Williams fitting illegal water-cooled brakes in 1982, Tyrrell's underweight car two years later and BAR's secret fuel tank from 2005, it's most often only the team(s) which commit foul play who cop the punishment. These examples were for technical breaches but, when the FIA found Michael Schumacher guilty of deliberately shunting at Jerez in 1997 and Monaco qualifying in 2006, it was the driver who was pinged rather than the entire session results erased.

In line with the limited precedent, then, it would surely only be Renault which could be disqualified from Singapore – and that would leave Hamilton better off. He would climb a place to second in the race classification while Massa would still leave empty-handed in 12th owing to *that* fumbled Ferrari attempt to refuel his car. And if, by some twist, there was any kind of adjustment, is there not then scope to argue that the drivers' mindsets heading into the Brazil finale would have been altered so they drove differently? Would that race need to be called into question too?

For the 2021 Abu Dhabi title-decider, the FIA itself determined that the rules were wrongly applied. Yet the results were not overturned. All told, unfortunately for Massa, everywhere you look, the chances of 2008 being edited in a way to crown him king are slim to nil.

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